

One year after Ted Kaczynski's death

Anonymous

2024

On 10 June, 2023, Ted Kaczynski died in prison, known for his radical critique against the techno-industrial system, which he had made into action between the 1970s and 1990s, sending a series of mail bombs to various individuals and targets related to the technological development. He was sentenced to eight consecutive life sentences without the possibility of suspension, after being arrested thanks to the help of his brother, who had recognised his way of writing in his manifesto: *The Industrial Society and its Future*.

Whether or not one agrees with the strategy of his attacks or with his approaches, he was undoubtedly a remarkable revolutionary spirit, in the view that, having perceived the destructive course taken by modern society, he did not remain in words, but decided to do something with whatever means we could, defying the comforts and security of a peaceful "normal" life.

Below is a critical analysis of some key points of his political theory published anonymously online at the *Anarchy Press Gr* on the occasion of his death anniversary, as well as a profound strategic article written by Kaczynski himself in 2002 for the *Green Anarchy* magazine. Although 22 years have passed since then, his words about what are the truly vulnerable points of the system and how to attack them, remain extremely relevant, and there are still not enough discussions about this important issue.

Anarchy Press Gr: "Text that was sent to us, on the occasion of the one year anniversary of Ted Kaczynski's death"

*Angels with needles poked
through our eyes
And let the ugly light of the
world in
We were no longer blind
— M.M.*

Such days, one year ago, on 14¹ June 2023, Ted Kaczynski died in his cell, more widely known by the nickname Unabomber. Kaczynski spent the last 27 years of his life in prison for bombings in favour of conserving the natural environment that cost the lives of three people during his 17-year long struggle. According to the official version, Kaczynski committed suicide while in the final stage of cancer. Details of his suicide were not officially known, but leaks say he was hung. On the internet or in a relevant documentary one can find a plethora of information about his course as a miracle child who was accepted at Harvard at 15 years old to study mathematics, about the abuse he received there, about his gender concerns that (supposedly) shaped his later life and about the very interesting legal consequences of his arrest. Here, however, I will refer to the political dimension of his action, which is rather overlooked.

¹ The date is wrong. His death was at 10 June 2023.

Kaczynski exercised a peculiar charm in a politically motley crowd. On the one hand, his criticism of the left, for the most part of justified, and his embrace with the values of conservation – something rare in environmental circles – made him a favourite in part of the far right. On the other hand, his dedication to the environmental struggle and his practical eco-centered way of life – abandoned his life in civilisation to live in a hut in the wild forests of Montana – made him inevitably part of the ecological movement. At the same time, his antiindustrial orientation, as shown in *The Industrial Society and its Future* and his later books and texts that emerged, to a large extent prophetic for what we live today, brought him very close to the so-called green anarchism. It is well known that, as many have already emphasized, the anti-industrial positions developed by Kaczynski were not original, but discreetly stolen by Jacques Ellul. I would add that he often echoes in his work what Marcuse had first formulated. In addition, the common features of Kaczynski's action with the revolutionary avant-garde of the new left, as it was expressed in the 1960s and 1970s, is evident (I will come back to it).

It is rather obvious that from a moral perspective the blind blows of Kaczynski that killed citizens are invalidating in the bud his fight. However, there are two interesting points of Kaczynski's thought and action that have not been underlined, as I believe, as much as they should have been, and I would like summarise them. The first point is the complete disenchantment of the nature and the preindustrial lifestyle as an ideal or something better than today's world in which we are all consumed, a view that is often found in related discussions: as he had explained in detail in the letters he once exchanged with Zerzan and in his criticism of primitivism, even this radically eco-centric lifestyle is horrible. Horrible in a different way, but in any case horrible – with a lot of pain, violence and inequality, both within human communities and against other animals. Kaczynski mentions typical examples of primary sources for the murderous hunting that was done en masse by the Indians, for the deliberate torturous deaths caused by the animals by the Pygmies, and for the complete depreciation and ridicule of animals from the latter at the time they leave their last breath. No, the infamous "respect" of animals murdered for their supposed reasonable use by humans has not been a dominant example in any society and is nothing more than a vacant wish list of animal abusers to justify their unjustified wretchedness. With corresponding examples, Kaczynski highlights how sexism and various hierarchies are reproduced maximally in human societies that have direct contact with nature.

So if the above apply, if there can be no real harmonisation with nature and our relationship with it will remain in any case competitive and social hierarchies heightened, why would one seek to live in nature and as part of nature? Because, Kaczynski tells us, living in this way we get rid of the sad diseases of civilisation: we cease to have depression, nutritional or sleep disorders, chronic stress and so on, while at the same time we cease to be concerned by socially constructed barren material desires. I guess that in the eyes of most of the people this answer seems oversimplified. After all, even if we have the mood for such a resignation and change – which is very doubtful about the overwhelming majority of us – it may be impossible for those who are infected

with the germ of civilisation to eliminate these diseases. But the argument continues in a more political context: Living in this way we do not recognise any authority over us, except of an ultimate naturalistic flow of things. At this point Kaczynski's imperative ceases to be liberating. The futile and painful element of our existence continues to exist, but we accept it as a natural event and not as a product of oppression or as something imposed by an anthropogenic system that we never approved. No repression is imposed from above, and no painful condition: we choose it on our own. In this new and mostly ascetic context the answers – and not the solutions – are not found in social antagonism but in internal reflection, which is directly shaped by the environment.

The second point comes from the first and concerns the context in which Kaczynski gave his fight. In classical political philosophy, Hobbes grants absolute power to Leviathan, in the turn however giving to the citizen the freedom to privatise and deal with their personal life. Something similar can be said that also applies to the case of the departure proposed by Kazinski, as through this choice one denies the obligations to modern civilisation along with the conveniences he provides, and seeks to exhaust his freedoms and examine his self within the nature. Kaczynski in 1971 set up his small hut in Montana's forests, without water and electricity, and over time developed excellent survival abilities. Soon, however, he himself found out that the isolation he had chosen is not possible, when he saw the construction of a highway happening at a short distance from his hut and realised the power and expansion of industrial civilisation. Then, as he said in an interview, the priority of his life became a revenge for the system.

So somewhere there Kaczynski thinks he has to take action and the rest is pretty much known, but it's worth staying at this point. Kaczynski was looking for a shelter in the Montana forests that he eventually didn't find. Not because he didn't look for it well enough, but because he had not realised from the outset that there was no escape from the industrial civilisation that he hated. Realising that it is impossible to get out of the system, Kaczynski begins his campaign of revenge. But can a social project be characterized by revenge? Definitely no. So what struggle is that? It is a struggle that can be either collective or individual, but it is certainly not social and not democratic – and that, I believe, is one of the few characteristics that the environmental movement has in common with the animal defense movement – since even if it was possible for a sustainable living of 8 billion people (which does not exist), "society" at every opportunity proves in practice which side it takes in this confrontation and what priorities it has.

Didn't Kazinski know these? Of course, he knew them, that's why he described his struggle as an act of revenge. It is precisely this awareness that makes him a part of the tradition of revolutionary avant-garde and separates him from the majority of the ecological movement, which rarely comes out of the bounds of harmlessness and/or cartoonism. Also, it was this awareness of his that broke the political barriers and brought him mentally with people from different starting points. What these

people could do if once, in an unspecified way, came together in a literally sense, is a melancholic question.

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From Anarchy Press Gr, 19/06/24

The Ted K Archive

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Blessed Is The Flame #2.
<<https://actforfree.noblogs.org/files/2024/08/Blessed-Is-The-Flame-Issue-2.pdf>>

www.thetedkarchive.com