

Unabomber essay urges attacks on 'techno-industrial system'

Dan Eggen & Dominic Gates

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The last time Theodore Kaczynski had a lengthy article published, his 35,000-word manifesto led his brother to identify him as the Unabomber, the man who had killed three people and injured 23 more during a 17-year mail-bomb spree that authorities could not solve.

Seven years later, locked behind the walls of a federal maximum security prison, Kaczynski has apparently managed to get his controversial views in print again.

In an article published this spring by Green Anarchy, a radical environmental newsletter, Kaczynski calls on revolutionaries to "eliminate the entire techno-industrial system" by "hitting where it hurts" and disparages the activities of most radicals as "pointless."

The essay, which repeats Kaczynski's contention that modern society must be destroyed, has disturbed Unabomber survivors as well as prison officials, who are investigating whether the article violated rules that prohibit prisoners from publishing under their own names. Even the newsletter's editors objected to some of Kaczynski's views.

"I'm surprised that he's able to write these things," said Charles Epstein, a California physician and researcher who lost fingers from one hand when he opened a mail bomb Kaczynski sent in 1993. "To the extent that his message potentially influences malleable people, it's a concern."

Authorities are still reviewing the case, but they said they believe the essay is authentic. U.S. Bureau of Prisons officials declined to say whether they have asked Kaczynski about the article or whether they may have come across it as they monitored his outgoing mail.

However, they noted that the article expresses views similar to Kaczynski's opinions in the 1995 manifesto – which was published by the Washington Post and the New York Times after the then-unidentified bomber threatened more attacks if it was not printed.

Despite Kaczynski's contention that modern society must be destroyed and that the biotechnology industry is the best place to start the attack, federal prosecutors said four years ago that Kaczynski's 35,000-word manifesto was essentially a public relations smoke screen.

In a sentencing memorandum, filed in Sacramento federal court in April 1998, the prosecutors said Kaczynski's personal diary shows he spent 17 years maiming and killing people simply for "personal revenge" and nothing else.

"While Kaczynski adopted the pretense that he was killing for the greater good of society," Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen Freccero wrote, "two points are clear from the writings seized from his (cabin in Montana). First, his desire to kill preceded by several years any serious concerns about technology.

Second, he wanted to kill not out of some altruistic sense that he would thereby benefit society, but, in his own words, out of 'personal revenge' and without any kind of philosophical or moralistic justification."

"I believe in nothing," Kaczynski wrote in the 22,000-page personal journal he started keeping in 1969. "I don't even believe in the cult of nature worshipers or wilderness worshipers."

One of the Green Anarchy newsletter's editors, John Zerzan of Eugene, Ore., said he corresponds regularly with Kaczynski and received the essay from him, written in longhand.

In a rambling style, Kaczynski's essay dismisses the tactics of anti-globalization and pro-environment militants who focus on "smashing up McDonald's or Starbucks" instead of working to "destroy . . . modern technology itself."

"It's right in keeping with his general take on things," said Zerzan, 58, a radical author who previously attracted notoriety by visiting Kaczynski in prison and defending some of his actions. "There's not a total agreement with his point of view among the editors. But very often his views are worth publishing. . . . We definitely concur with his views on the dangers of technology."

The article is not Kaczynski's first published piece from prison, but it is the longest, and the one most similar to his 1995 manifesto.

In 1999, OFF! Magazine, produced by students at the State University of New York at Binghamton, published a "parable" by Kaczynski in which he ridiculed the advocates of animal rights, gay rights and other leftist causes.

The fall 2001 issue of Green Anarchy published a letter from Kaczynski complaining that Subcomandante Marcos, leader of the Zapatista rebels in Chiapas, Mexico, was insufficiently pure as a revolutionary because he advocates bringing water and electricity to peasants. Letters to the editor do not violate prison regulations.

Kaczynski, now 60, is serving four consecutive life terms in the federal prison near Florence, Colo., where he is confined to his cell 23 hours a day but is allowed mail privileges.

Kaczynski's article was accompanied by a note from the "Green Anarchy editorial collective" explaining that, while the group supports Kaczynski as "an anarchist political prisoner," it disagrees with his views on feminism and other "liberation struggles."

Chronicle staff writer Michael Taylor contributed to this report.

The Ted K Archive

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