Forward to Technological Slavery

Ted Kaczynski

I have to begin by saying that I am deeply dissatisfied with this book. It should have been an organized and systematic exposition of a series of related ideas. Instead, it is an unorganized collection of writings that expound the ideas unsystematically. And some ideas that I consider important are not even mentioned. I simply have not had the time to organize, rewrite, and complete the contents of this book. The principal reason why I have not had time is that agencies of the United States government have created unnecessary legal difficulties for me. To mention only the most important of these difficulties, the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of California has formally proposed to round up and confiscate the original and every copy of everything I have ever written and turn over all such papers to my alleged "victims" through a fictitious sale that will allow the "victims" to acquire all of the papers without having to pay anything for them. Under this plan, the government would even confiscate papers that I have given to libraries, including papers that have been on library shelves for several years. The documents in which the United

States Attorney has put forward this proposal are available to the public: They are Document 704 and Document 713, Case Number CR-S-96-2S9 GEB, United States District Court for the Eastern District of California.

At this writing, I have the assistance of lawyers in resisting the government's actions in regard to my papers. But I have learned from hard experience that it is unwise to leave everything in the hands of lawyers; one is well advised to research the legal issues oneself, keep track of what the lawyers are doing, and intervene when necessary. Such work is time-consuming, especially when one is confined in a maximum-security prison and therefore has only very limited access to law books.

I would have preferred to delay publication of the present book until I'd had time to prepare its contents properly, but it seemed advisable to publish before the government took action to confiscate all my papers. I have, moreover, another reason to avoid delay: The Federal Bureau of Prisons has proposed new regulations that would allow prison wardens to cut off almost all communications between allegedly "terrorist" prisoners and the outside world. The proposed regulations are published in the Federal Register, Volume 71, Number 63, pages 16520–25.

I have no idea when the new regulations may be approved, but if and when that happens it is all too possible that my communications will be cut off. Obviously it is important for me to publish while I can still communicate relatively freely, and that is why this book has to appear now in an unfinished state.

The version of "Industrial Society and its Future" that appears in this book differs from the original manuscript only in trivial ways; spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and the like have been corrected or improved here and there. As far as I know, all earlier versions of "Industrial Society and its Future" published in English or French contain numerous errors, such as the omission of parts of sentences and even of whole sen-

in America today. Just what form a revolutionary movement should take remains open to discussion. What is clear is that, for a start, people who are serious about addressing the problem of technology must establish systematic contact with one another and a sense of common purpose; they must strictly separate themselves from the "adversary culture"; they must be oriented toward practical action, without renouncing a priori the most extreme forms of action; and they must take as their goal nothing less than the dissolution of technological civilization.

If we want to precipitate the collapse of technological society, then our goal is a revolutionary one under any reasonable definition of that term. What we are faced with, therefore, is a need for out-and-out revolution.

3. The political left is technological society's first line of defense against revolution. In fact, the left today serves as a kind of fire extinguisher that douses and quenches any nascent revolutionary movement. What do I mean by "the left"? If you think that racism, sexism, gay rights, animal rights, indigenous people's rights, and "social justice" in general are among the most important issues that the world currently faces, then you are a leftist as I use that term. If you don't like this application of the world "leftist," then you are free to designate the people I'm referring to by some other term. But, whatever you call them, the people who extinguish revolutionary movements are the people who are drawn indiscriminately to causes: racism, sexism, gay rights, animal rights, the environment, poverty, sweatshops, neocolonialism…it's all the same to them. These people constitute a subculture that has been labeled "the adversary culture."[5] Whenever a movement of resistance begins to emerge, these leftists (or whatever you choose to call them) come swarming to it like flies to honey until they outnumber the original members of the movement, take it over, and turn it into just another leftist faction, thereby emasculating it. The history of "Earth First!" provides an elegant example of this process.[6]

4. What is needed is a new revolutionary movement, dedicated to the elimination of technological society, that will take measures to exclude all leftists, as well as the assorted neurotics, lazies, incompetents, charlatans, and persons deficient in self-control who are drawn to resistance movements

---

[5] See Paul Hollander, *The Survival of the Adversary Culture*.
[6] The process is ably documented by Martha E Lee, *Earth First!: Environmental Apocalypse*, Syracuse University Press, 1995.

tences, and some of these errors are serious enough so that they change or obscure the meaning of an entire paragraph. What is much more serious is that at least one completely spurious article has been published under my name. I recently received word from a correspondent in Spain that an article titled "*La Rehabilitación del Estado por los Izquierdistas*" ("The Rehabilitation of the State by the Leftists") had been published and attributed to me. But I most certainly did not write such an article. So the reader should not assume that everything published under my name has actually been written by me. Needless to say, all writings attributed to me in the present book are authentic.

I would like to thank Dr. David Skrbina for having asked questions and raised arguments that spurred me to formulate and write down certain ideas that I had been incubating for years.

I owe thanks to a number of other people also. At the end of "The Truth About Primitive Life" I have thanked by name (and with their permission) several people who provided me with materials for that essay, and some of those people have helped me enormously in other ways as well. In particular, I owe a heavy debt of gratihlde to Facundo Bermudez, Marjorie Kennedy, and Patrick Scardo. I owe special thanks to my Spanish correspondent who writes under the pseudonym "Último Reducto," and to a female friend of his, both of whom provided stimulating argument; and Último Reducto moreover has ably translated many of my writings into Spanish. I hesitate to name others to whom I owe thanks, because I'm not sure that they would want to be named publicly. For the sake of clarity, I want to state here in summary form the four main points that I've tried to make in my writings.

1. Technological progress is carrying us to inevitable disaster. There may be physical disaster (for example, some form of environmental catastrophe), or there may be disaster in terms of human dignity (reduction of the human race to a degraded

and servile condition). But disaster of one kind or another will certainly result from continued technological progress.

This is not an eccentric opinion. Among those frightened by the probable consequences of technological progress are Bill Joy, whose article "Why the Future Doesn't Need Us"[1] is now famous, Martin Rees, author of the book *Our Final Century*,[2] and Richard A. Posner, author of *Catastrophe: Risk and Response*.[3] None of these three is by any stretch of the imagination radical or predisposed to find fault with the existing structure of society. Richard Posner is a conservative judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. Bill Joy is a well-known computer wizard, and Martin Rees is the Astronomer Royal of Britain. These last two men, having devoted their lives to technology, would hardly be likely to fear it without having good reason to do so. Joy, Rees, and Posner are concerned mainly with physical disaster and with the possibility or indeed the likelihood that human beings will be supplanted by machines. The disaster that technological progress implies for human dignity has been discussed by men like Jacques Ellul and Lewis Mumford, whose books are widely read and respected. Neither man is considered to be out on the fringe or even close to it.

2. Only the collapse of modern technological civilization can avert disaster. Of course, the collapse of technological civilization will itself bring disaster. But the longer the technoindustrial system continues to expand, the worse will be the eventual disaster. A lesser disaster now will avert a greater one later. The development of the technoindustrial system cannot be controlled, restrained, or guided, nor can its effects be moderated to any substantial degree.

This, again, is not an eccentric opinion. Many writers, beginning with Karl Marx, have noted the fundamental importance of technology in determining the course of society's development. In effect, they have recognized that it is technology that rules society, not the other way around. Ellul especially has emphasized the autonomy of technology, i.e., the fact that modern technology has taken on a life of its own and is not subject to human control. Ellul, moreover, was not the first to formulate this conclusion. Already in 1934 the Mexican thinker Samuel Ramos[4] clearly stated the principle of technological autonomy, and this insight was adumbrated as early as the 1860s by Samuel Butler. Of course, no one questions the obvious fact that human individuals or groups can control technology in the sense that at a given point in time they can decide what to do with a particular item of technology. What the principle of technological autonomy asserts is that the overall development of technology, and its long-term consequences for society, are not subject to human control. Hence, as long as modern technology continues to exist, there is little we can do to moderate its effects.

A corollary is that nothing short of the collapse of technological society can avert a greater disaster. Thus, if we want to defend ourselves against technology, the only action we can take that might prove effective is an effort to precipitate the collapse of technological society. Though this conclusion is an obvious consequence of the principle of technological autonomy, and though it possibly is implied by certain statements of Ellul, I know of no conventionally published writer who has explicitly recognized that our only way out is through the collapse of technological society. This seeming blindness to the obvious can only be explained as the result of timidity.

---

[1] *Wired* magazine, April 2000.
[2] Published by William Heinemann, 2003.
[3] Oxford University Press, 2004.

---

[4] *El perfil del hombre y la cultura en México*, Décima Edición, Espasa-Calpe Mexicana, Mexico City 1982 (originally published in 1934), pages 104—105.