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and green anarchists
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Ted Kaczynski's thoughts on revolution, anti-tech ideology, and green anarchists in a letter to a German.

There are two difficulties connected with the characteristic victimization issues of the left, such as the alleged oppression of women, homosexuals, racial or ethnic minorities, and animals.

First, these issues distract attention from the technology problem. Rebellious energies that might have been directed against the technological system are expended instead on the irrelevant problems of racism, sexism, etc. Therefore it would have been better if these problems had been completely solved. In that case they could not have distracted attention from the technology problem.

But revolutionists should not attempt to solve the problems of racism, sexism, and so forth, because, in addressing these problems, they would further distract attention from the problem of technology. Furthermore, revolutionists could

contribute very little to the solution of the problems of women, minorities, etc., because technological society itself is already working to solve these problems. Every day (at least in the United States) the media teach us that women are equal to men, that homosexuals should be respected, that all races should receive equal treatment, and so forth. Hence, any efforts in this direction by revolutionists would be superfluous. Through their obsessive concentration on victimization issues such as the alleged oppression of women, homosexuals, and racial minorities, leftists vastly increase the extent to which these issues distract attention from the technology problem. But it would be counterproductive for revolutionists to try to obstruct leftists' efforts to solve the problems of women, minorities, and so forth, because such obstruction would intensify the controversy over these issues and therefore would distract even more attention from the technology problem.

Instead, revolutionists must repeatedly point out and emphasize that the energy expended on the leftists' victimization issues is wasted, and that that energy should be expended on the technological problem.

A second difficulty connected with victimization issues is that any group that concerns itself which such issues will attract leftists. As the Manifesto argues, leftists are useless as revolutionists because most of them don't really want to overthrow the existing form of society.

They are interested only in satisfying their own psychological needs through vehement advocacy of "causes." Any cause will do as long as it is not specifically right-wing.

Thus, when any movement (other than a right-wing movement) arises that aspires to be revolutionary, leftists come swarming to it like flies to honey until they outnumber the original members of the movement, take it over, and transform it into a leftist movement. Thereafter the movement is useless for revolutionary purposes. The case of the movement called Earth First! provides a neat example of this process.

(See Martha F. Lee, Earth First!: Environmental Apocalypse, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, New York, 1995.) Thus, the left serves as a mechanism for emasculating nascent revolutionary movements and rendering them harmless.

Therefore, in order to form an effective movement, revolutionists must take pains to exclude leftists from the movement. In order to drive away leftists, revolutionists should not only avoid involvement in efforts to help women, homosexuals, or racial minorities; they should specifically disavow any interest in such issues, and they should emphasize again and again that women, homosexuals, racial minorities, and so forth should consider themselves lucky because our society treats them better than most earlier societies have done. By adopting this position, revolutionists will separate themselves from the left and discourage leftists from attempting to join them.

You seem to think that increasing the pressure to which people are subject in modern society will be sufficient to produce a revolution. But this is not correct. Certainly a serious grievance must be present in order for a revolution to occur, but a serious grievance, or even the greatest suffering, by itself is not sufficient to bring about a revolution. People who have studied the process of revolution are agreed that in addition to a grievance, some precipitating factor is necessary. The precipitating factor might be a dynamic leader, some extraordinary event, or anything that arouses new hope that rebellion can bring relief from the grievance.

Thus Trotsky wrote:

<quote>"In reality the mere existence of privations is not enough to cause an insurrection…It is necessary that…new conditions and new ideas should open the prospect of a revolutionary way out."[1]</quote>

[1] Leon Trotsky, The History of the Russian Revolution, translated by Max Eastman (three volumes in one), Pathfinder, New York, 1980, Vol. Two, page vii.

In the opinion of the philosopher-sociologist Eric Hoffer: "[T]he presence of an outstanding leader is indispensable. Without him there will be no movement. The ripeness of the times does not automatically produce a mass movement…"[2]

Similarly the Encyclopaedia Britannica: "The rank and file of any group; especially a big one, have been shown to be remarkably passive until aroused by quasi-parental leaders whom they admire and trust."[3]

Of course, the prerequisites for revolution are much more complex than the mere presence of dynamic leaders or of "new conditions and new ideas" that arouse hope. For an extended discussion, see Neil J. Smelser, Theory of Collective Behavior, Macmillan Company, New York, 1971, pages 313-384. The point is, however, that revolutionists cannot simply wait passively for hard conditions to produce a revolution. Instead, revolutionists must actively prepare the way for revolution.

I should add that the remarks about leftism, here and in the Manifesto, are based on observation of the American left. I do not know whether the remarks can be applied without modification to the European left.

You write: "Let us not deceive ourselves about the real role of women." If you mean that motherhood is the only suitable role for women, then I disagree. Quite apart from child-rearing, women have always done very important, even indispensable work, and work that was often very hard physically or required great skill. To mention only a few examples: Among the Mbuti pygmies of Africa and exclusive of child-rearing, the women worked far more than the men, they provided the greater part of the food, they built the huts, and their work was often very hard. Among other things, they

[2] Eric Hoffer, The True Believer, § 90.

[3] The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th edition, 2003, Vol. 26, article "Propaganda," page 175.

climate to such an extent that even specialists in the field can't predict the consequences. Even if the system immediately stopped releasing carbon dioxide, the Earth's climate probably would not revert to its previous condition. No one knows where our climate will go. We don't even know for certain whether the Earth will still be inhabitable at the end of this century. Of course, the more carbon dioxide the system releases, the greater the danger is. Yes, the system could destroy itself by progressing faster and releasing greater quantities of carbon dioxide, but in the process it would destroy everything else, too.

I have already emphasized that what could lead to a revolution would not be the worsening of living conditions, but a psychological situation conducive to revolution. And one of the indispensable psychological preconditions for revolution is that people should have hope. If there's no hope, there will be no revolution. A serious problem is the fact that many of the most intelligent people have already lost hope. They think that it's too late, the Earth can't be saved. If we speeded up the destructive action of the system, we would only spread and deepen this hopelessness.

carried huge stacks of firewood into camp on their backs.[4] The women of hunting-and-gathering societies of warm climates usually provided the greater part of the food, whereas in cold countries the men provided the greater part through hunting.[5] But in cold countries the women produced the clothing,[6] which in such climates was indispensable, and in doing so the women of certain hunting-and-gathering societies showed extraordinary skill.[7]

Thus, without denying the importance of their role as mothers, we must also acknowledge the importance of the role of women as laborers and skilled handworkers. And moreover I maintain that women, just as much as men, need work, that is, activities directed toward a goal (the "power process").[8] And I suspect that the reason why today's women want to take up masculine occupations is that their role as mother is not enough to satisfy them now that technology has reduced other traditional feminine occupations to triviality. The modern woman doesn't need to make clothes, because she can buy them; she doesn't need to weave baskets, because she has at her disposal any number of good containers; she doesn't need to look for fruits, nuts, and roots in the forest, because she can purchase good food; and so forth.

You write: "The system operates so insidiously that it talks ethnic minorities into believing that the loss of their identity is a good thing. Minorities are manipulated to their own dis-

[4] Paul Schebesta, Die Bambuti-Pygmäen vom Ituri, II. Band, I. Teil, Institut Royal Colonial Beige, Brussels, 1941, pages 11-21, 31, 142, 170.

[5] Carleton S. Coon, The Hunting Peoples, Little, Brown and Company, Boston and Toronto, 1971, pages 72-73. Elizabeth Cashdan, "Hunters and Gatherers: Economic Behavior in Bands," in S. Plattner,Economic Anthropology, Stanford University Press, 1989, page 28.

[6] Coon, op. cit., page 48.

[7] Gontran de Poncins, Kabloona, Time-Life Books, Alexandria, Virginia, USA, 1980, pages 14, 15, 124.

[8] Industrial Society and its Future, paragraphs 33-37.

advantage, and entirely without any perceptible compulsion." Yes, I agree with this, except that in some countries the system is more cunning: Instead of telling ethnic minorities that the loss of their identity is a good thing it tells them to maintain their ethnic identity, but at the same time the system knows very well how to drain ethnic identity of its real content and reduce it to empty external forms. This has happened both in the United States[9] and in the Soviet Union.

Of course, I know very little about German universities, but American university intellectuals, apart from rare exceptions, are not at all suited to be members of an effective revolutionary movement. The majority belong to the left. Some of these intellectuals might make themselves useful by spreading ideas about the technology problem, but most of them are frightened at the idea of the overthrow of the system and cannot be active revolutionaries. They are the "men of words" of whom Eric Hoffer has spoken:

> The preliminary work of undermining existing institutions, of familiarizing the masses with the idea of change, and of creating a receptivity to a new faith, can be done only by men who are, first and foremost, talkers or writers…Thus imperceptibly the man of words undermines the established institutions, discredits those in power, weakens prevailing beliefs and loyalties, and sets the stage for the rise of a mass movement.[10]
>
> When the old order begins to fall apart, many of the vociferous men of words, who prayed so long for the day, are in a funk. The first glimpse of the face of anarchy frightens them out of their wits.[11]

[9] See Industrial Society and its Future, paragraph 29.
[10] Hoffer, op. cit., section 104.
[11] Hoffer, op. cit., section 110.

world, and perhaps all higher forms of life. Remember that not all of the destructive processes initiated by the system will stop as soon as the system falls apart. Consider for example the greenhouse effect.

<quote>[G]lobal climate systems are booby-trapped with tipping points and feedback loops, thresholds past which the slow creep of environmental decay gives way to sudden and self-perpetuating collapse. Pump enough CO2 into the sky, and that last part per million of greenhouse gas behaves like the 212th degree Fahrenheit [212° Fahrenheit = 100° Celsius] that turns a pot of hot water into a plume of billowing steam…Things are happening a lot faster than anyone predicted, says Bill Chameides, chief scientist for the advocacy group Environmental Defense and a former professor of atmospheric chemistry. The last 12 months have been alarming, adds Ruth Curry of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute in Massachusetts. The ripple through the scientific community is palpable.…Is it too late to reverse the changes global warming has wrought? That's still not clear… (Time magazine, April 3, 2006, pages 35, 36.)</quote>

By releasing so much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, the system has already disrupted the Earth's

can find no groups or movements other than the leftist or similar ones. So a young person joins one of these groups and either is converted to its ideology or else gets discouraged, leaves the group, gives up, and becomes apathetic. What is needed is a real revolutionary movement that such young people could join before they are lured by some leftist group and ruined by it.

Speeding up the system. It is not always safer to proceed on the assumption that the worst case will occur. For example: We are on a ship that is sinking. The "worst case" is that the ship will sink within two minutes. So we immediately throw the boat into the water, jump into the boat and row hurriedly away from the ship. Then we notice that we are going to die because we haven't taken any food or water with us. It would have been better to provide ourselves with food and water instead of rowing away in such a hurry, for the ship has not sunk as fast as we feared. But now it's too late…

So we should not prepare ourselves for the worst case only but, as far as possible, for all cases.

You maintain that we should speed up the action of "the machine" (that is, of the system) so that the machine will destroy itself. But in destroying itself the machine will also destroy us and our

The creative man of words, no matter how bitterly he may criticize and deride the existing order, is actually attached to the present. His passion is to reform and not to destroy. When the mass movement remains wholly in his keeping, he turns it into a mild affair. The reforms he initiates are of the surface, and life flows on without a sudden break.[12]</quote>

You write: "The movement should be a completely new beginning, beyond all positions of the left and of the right." Yes indeed! I agree completely!

You're right: We need to worry about the time factor. But we also have to take into consideration the possibility that the struggle will last a very long time, perhaps many decades. We should overthrow the system as soon as possible, but we must nevertheless prepare ourselves for a long-term revolutionary effort, because it may turn out that no quick overthrow of the system will be feasible.

You point out that technological progress proceeds at lightning speed; that it will take perhaps twenty years to develop the first computers that will surpass every human brain in computing power; that genetic engineering will inevitably be applied for the "improvement" of human beings; that new drugs will be developed. All of this may be true. But the future may be different from what we expect. For example:

<quote>A scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology believes that within eight

[12] Hoffer, op. cit., section 111.

years a machine with more intelligence than the genius level will be developed…Other scientists…disagreed only on the timetable. They suggested 15 years…</quote>

This is from the newspaper The Chicago Daily News, November 16, 1970. Obviously, what the scientists predicted has not happened. Similarly, attempts to cure certain human diseases by means of genetic technology have run into difficulties: Gene therapy can cause cancer. Thus it is possible that computers may not surpass human beings in intelligence as soon as is believed; genetic engineering may not be so easily applied to humans; and so forth. On the other hand, it is also possible that these developments will proceed even faster than anyone now suspects. In any case the social consequences of the new technology are unforeseeable and may be different from what we expect. The social consequences of the technological progress that has occurred up to the present time are different from what I expected when I was young. Therefore we have to prepare ourselves for all possibilities, including the possibility that our struggle may last a very long time.

There are two mistakes that almost all people, with the exception of experienced politicians and social scientists, make when they devise a plan for changing society.

The first mistake is that one works out a plan through pure reason, as if one were designing a bridge or a machine, and then one expects the plan to succeed.

tionary myth. This doesn't mean that they should invent a myth arbitrarily. Instead, they must discover and bring to light the real myth that already exists in inchoate form, and give it a definite structure.</quote>

You are right in saying that the role of the revolutionaries is only that of a catalyst. Revolutionaries can't create a revolution from nothing. All they can do is realize those possibilities that are offered by the conditions under which people live, just as a catalyst can bring about a chemical reaction only if all of the necessary reagents are available. You seem to believe that one can best play the role of a catalyst by intensifying the objective grounds for dissatisfaction. But I am convinced that the objective grounds for dissatisfaction are already sufficient. In order to play the role of a catalyst one must achieve a psychological effect; for example, by discovering and utilizing the right myth.

There are many young people who recognize that the technological system is destroying our world and our freedom; they want to resist it, but they know that they can't achieve anything alone, therefore they look for a group or a movement that they can join. Under the circumstances existing today, they

the Koran could have responded to the yearnings of the Arabs?

Even if you were right and for each revolution only a single myth were possible, still we would not be entitled to assume that people would develop the right myth on their own, and develop it in time. The myths of the French and Russian revolutions were not developed by the people at large, but by a small number of intellectuals. Maybe the work of the intellectuals consisted only in giving form and structure to the formless or unconscious dissatisfactions and yearnings of the nation; nevertheless, this work was indispensable for the success of the revolution.

So I maintain that the task of revolutionaries is not to increase or intensify the objective grounds for dissatisfaction. There are already plenty enough grounds for dissatisfaction. Instead, revolutionaries should do the following:

> 1. There are certain counterfeit grounds for dissatisfaction (e.g., the alleged problems of women, ethnic minorities, homosexuals, cruelty to animals, etc.), that serve to divert attention from the real grounds for dissatisfaction. Revolutionaries must somehow circumvent or negate these diversionary tactics.
>
> 2. Revolutionaries must bring into effective operation the genuine but as yet poorly perceived grounds for dissatisfaction.
>
> 3. To this end revolutionaries must (among other things) develop a revolu-

> One can successfully design a bridge or the like because material objects reliably obey precise rules. Thus one can predict how material objects will react under given circumstances. But in the realm of social phenomena we have at our disposal very few reliable, exact rules; therefore, in general, we cannot reliably predict social phenomena.
>
> Among the few reliable predictions that we can make is the prediction that a plan will not succeed. If you let an automobile without a driver roll down a rough slope, you can't predict the route that the automobile will take, but you can predict that it will not follow a previously selected route. If you release a group of mice from a cage, you can't predict which way each mouse will run, but you can predict that the mice will not march in accord with a previously specified plan. So it goes, in general, in the domain of social phenomena.
>
> Social scientists understand how difficult it is to carry out any longterm plan:
>
> <quote>History has no lessons for the future except one: that nothing ever works out as the participants quite intended or expected.[13]
>
> World War 1…ended in various plans for peace as illusory as the plans for war had been. As the historian William McNeill wrote, 'The irrationality of rational, professionalized planning could not have been made more patently manifest.'[14]

[13] Gordon S. Wood, "The Making of a Disaster," The New York Review, April 28, 2005, page 34.

[14] The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th edition, 2003, Volume 21, article "International Relations," page 807.

Most social planning is short-term…; the goals of planning are often not attained, and, even if the plan is successful in terms of the stated goals, it often has unforeseen consequences. The wider the scope and the longer the time span of planning, the more difficult it is to attain the goals and to avoid unforeseen and undesired consequences….Large-scale and long-term social developments in any society are still largely unplanned.[15]</quote>

The foregoing is indisputably true, and moreover it refers to the plan of the State. The State has power, vast quantities of information, and the capacity to analyze and utilize such quantities of information. We have no power and relatively little capacity to gather and analyze information. If it is impossible for the State to carry out a long-term social plan successfully, then all the more is it impossible for us.

Therefore I maintain that revolutionaries should not commit themselves to any predetermined, long-term or comprehensive plan. Instead, they should as far as possible rely on experience and proceed by trial and error, and commit themselves only to simple, short-term plans. Of course, revolutionaries should also have a comprehensive, long-term plan, but this must always be provisional, and the revolutionaries must always be ready to modify the comprehensive plan or even abandon it altogether, provided that they never forget the final goal, which is to overthrow the system. In other words, the movement must be flexible and prepared for all eventualities.

[15] Ibid., Volume 27, article "Social Structure and Change," page 370

have the ability to become successful leaders and agitators.

If you succeeded in infiltrating into the power-holding circles just three or four revolutionaries who, moreover, did not subsequently betray the revolution in order to keep their power and their prestige, that would be an amazing success. Such infiltrators could perhaps play a role in the revolution, but their role probably would not be decisive.

You say that revolutions are never planned on a drawing-board, and you are right. But I wouldn't say that revolutions have always been attributable to the dissatisfactions of some large segment of a society. Dissatisfaction is a precondition for revolution, but dissatisfaction by itself is not enough to bring about a revolution. I've emphasized that previously. Among other things a revolutionary myth is needed, and on this subject you write that revolutions have never chosen their ideals and myths freely, which is quite true. But then you write: "The circumstances under which people live leave them no other choice than to adopt exactly these myths and ideals and no others." I do not entirely agree with this. A myth can't be chosen arbitrarily. A myth can succeed only if it responds to the prevailing (perhaps in part unconscious) dissatisfactions and yearnings. But I'm not convinced that the circumstances under which people live always must precisely determine a single myth. For example: The Prophet Mohammed created an extraordinarily successful myth when he wrote the Koran. Would you venture to say that nothing other than precisely

years of effort has joined the power-holding circles. He likes his career, he now has power, and he has achieved these satisfactions through long years of effort. Will he want to lose all this through the destruction of the system? In rare, exceptional cases he will, but usually he will not. History offers countless examples of the young, hot-blooded rebel who swears to resist the system forever, but who then has a successful career, and when he is older and richer and has status and prestige, he comes to the conclusion that the system is not so bad after all, and that it is better to adapt himself to it.

There are further reasons to believe that your plan cannot succeed. The plan requires that the movement should remain secret and unknown to the public. But that is impossible. One can be quite sure that some member of the movement will change his mind or make a mistake, so that the existence of the movement will become publicly known. Then there will be official investigations and so forth. In history one finds examples of sophisticated spy networks, the secrecy of which was carefully guarded, but which nevertheless became known, though some of their cells may have succeeded in remaining secret. The existence of the movement that you propose likewise would surely become known.

In the fourth section of your letter you propose that leaders and agitators from the ranks of the leftists should be "instructed" by members of the movement. But, apart from exceptional cases, it is impossible to believe that members of the movement could have so much control over people who

The second of the above-mentioned errors is that one proposes a plan (let us assume that it is a very good plan) and then believes that a sufficient number of people will follow the plan merely because it is a good one. But if the goal of a plan is to change society, then, however excellent the plan may be, its excellence is not what will move people to follow it. We have to take human motivations into consideration.

In private life pure reason may often move a person to follow a good plan. For example, if through the use of reason we can convince a person that one doctor is more skillful than another, then the person will probably consult the more skillful doctor, because he knows that in this way he will recover better from his ailment.

On the other hand, if we can convince a person that a certain plan will be useful to society provided that a sufficient number of people follow the plan, this provides the person with at most a very weak motive to follow the plan, for he knows that it is very unlikely, or even impossible, that his own individual participation will by itself have any perceptible effect on society. For example: Many people know that it would be better for the world if everyone refused to use automobiles. Nevertheless, apart from rare exceptions, each one of these people has his automobile, because he says to himself that if he refuses to drive he will suffer great inconvenience without doing any perceptible good for the world; for the world will derive no perceptible advantage unless many millions of people refuse to use automobiles.

So we must always bear in mind that, with only rare exceptions, a person joins a revolutionary movement not primarily in order to achieve the movement's objective, but in order to fulfill his own psychological or physical needs or to experience some form of pleasure. However loyal and sincerely devoted he may later be to the revolutionary goal, his devotion has in some way grown out of his own needs or out of the pleasures he has experienced. Of course, the attainment of a movement's goal can fulfill the needs of a member, but in general only the actions of a few leaders can perceptibly increase the likelihood that the goal will be attained. As previously indicated, the rank-and-file member knows that his own individual participation will have at most only an imperceptible effect on the progress toward the goal. Therefore the goal by itself, and through cold reason alone, cannot motivate the rank-and-file member.

Since enthusiasm produces great pleasure, enthusiasm for a strongly desired goal can be enough to move a person to revolutionary action, but only when the attainment of the goal is very near. When the attainment of the goal appears to be improbable or distant in time, the goal by itself cannot arouse much enthusiasm.

When the attainment of the goal is not near, then the following satisfactions, for example, can motivate the rank-and-file member of a revolutionary movement:

1. Sense of purpose, the feeling that one has a goal around which to organize one's life.

2. Sense of power.

3. Sense of belonging, the feeling of being part of a cohesive social group.

4. Status or prestige within the movement; the approval of other members of the movement.

5. Anger, revenge; the opportunity to retaliate against the system.

Of course, one can also find satisfaction in one's contribution to the future attainment of the revolutionary goal, even if one's own individual contribution has only an imperceptible effect, but in that case the satisfaction is too weak to move anyone to make significant revolutionary efforts—apart from rare, exceptional cases. Therefore a revolutionary movement must be based chiefly on other motivations.

As for the sense of power—a cell consisting of ten people cannot afford a member much sense of power. The member will gain a sense of power only when he joins the power-holding circles of society, and then the member receives his sense of power not from the revolutionary movement but from his position within the system. He has perhaps one chance in a hundred of gaining a position of power, and he can reach such a position only through efforts extending over a long period.

A person will undertake such efforts and persist in them only if he finds satisfaction in his career. Let us assume, then, that a member of a revolutionary cell has had a successful career and after twenty