The Unabomber: Murderous Mastermind [B2]

La lucida analisi dei pericoli che la tecnologia rappresenta per la condizione umana e per l'ambiente fatta dal terrorista continua a inquietarci, nonostante siano passati trent'anni.

Thirty years ago, two of the most prestigious newspapers in the world **surrendered** to the **black**mail of a terrorist. After months of deliberation and ethical debate, on 19 September 1995, The Washington Post published, with the financial support of The New York Times, an eight-page special section titled "Industrial Society and its Future". The **essay** was a 35,000-word manifesto signed as FC (Freedom Club). The author, however, was best-known to the public as 'the Unabomber', the man responsible for a long and intermittent bombing campaign across the US that, starting in 1978, had killed three people and injured twenty-three others.

THE TERRORIST'S BROTHER

Both The New York Times and The Washington Post received the manifesto in June of that year, along with the demand that it be published within ninety days or the attacks would continue. Initially the FBI — who had **coined** the **nickname** 'Unabomber' because his first targets had been universities and airlines — **advised against** providing publicity to the ideas of a known killer. However, given the **lack** of progress in what had become the longest and most expensive criminal investigation in the history of the US, the **Attorney General** and the director of the FBI reconsidered the decision with the hope that someone might read the manifesto and recognise its author. One person did: his brother.

INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY

"Industrial Society and Its Future" was both a **full-on indictment** and a **convoluted** critique of modern society, **calling for** a worldwide revolution against the perceived dehumanising effects of the "industrial-technological

system." Consisting of 232 numbered paragraphs, the Unabomber Manifesto — as it is better known — offered a disturbing yet, at times, incisive analysis of the **harmful** consequences of technological progress on individual freedom, human psychology and the environment. The author of the text was eventually revealed to be Theodore (Ted) Kaczynski, a former college professor and maths genius who had **retreated** to a remote cabin in the Montana woods, living without electricity or **running water**, almost entirely **removed** from civilisation.

MATHS PRODIGY

Born in Chicago in 1942, Ted Kaczynski had been a child prodigy. At thirteen, he scored 164 on an **IQ test** — with 100 being the average score and 140 considered that of a genius. Brilliant but socially **withdrawn**, Kaczynski attended Harvard University at just sixteen and graduated with honours. Shortly after, he was employed at the University of California, Berkeley as its youngest-ever professor. But Kaczynski **resigned** after only eighteen months, retreating to a small cabin in the wilderness near Lincoln, Montana, one of the most isolated regions of the US.

TERROR CAMPAIGN

After a series of **clashes** with local **land developers** and authorities, Kaczynski began his campaign of terror. His first home-made explosive **device** was sent to Northwestern University in Chicago in May 1978, injuring a campus police officer. Over the years, he manufactured increasingly sophisticated bombs, either planting them or sending them by post to universities, airlines and tech companies he believed were complicit in the **decay** of modern society. In 1985, his attacks **claimed** their first fatality, a computer store owner in Sacramento, California. "People who **wilfully** and knowingly promote economic growth and technical progress, in our eyes they are criminals, and if they get blown up they **deserve** it," read one of the letters accompanying the manifesto.

FORENSIC LINGUISTICS

David Kaczynski's **tip** led to a forensic linguistic investigation that ultimately resulted in the arrest of his brother Ted in April 1996. Sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of **parole**, Kaczynski never expressed **remorse** for his crimes. He killed himself in June 2023, at the age of eighty-one, in a federal prison in North Carolina. During his trial, his defence team attempted to **pursue** an **insanity plea** to **avoid** the death penalty, but Kaczynski vehemently opposed the strategy and tried to **dismiss** his lawyers. However **insightful** his reflections on technological society may be, the **ruthlessness** of the Unabomber's **mindset** is summarised in paragraph 96 of his manifesto: "Even if these writings had had many readers, most of these readers would soon have forgotten what they had read as their minds were **flooded** by the mass of material to which the media expose them. In order to get our message before the public with some chance of making a **lasting impression**, we've had to kill people."   If you want to know more about this topic, read the article The Unabomber: Industrial Society And Its Future.

Glossary

- **lack** = mancanza
- **running water** = acqua corrente
- **clashes** = scontri, contrasti
- **insanity plea** = infermità mentale
- **flooded** = inondare
- **nickname** = soprannome
- **removed** = isolato
- **withdrawn** = introverso
- **device** = dispositivo, ordigno
- **pursue** = perseguire
- **avoid** = evitare
- **dismiss** = licenziare
- **full-on indictment** = accusa vera e propria
- **calling for** = incitare
- **resigned** = dimettersi
- **remorse** = pentimento
- **insightful** = perspicaci, approfondite
- **mindset** = mentalità, pensiero
- **lasting impression** = ricordo duraturo, impressione durevole
- **tip** = soffiata
- **blackmail** = ricatto
- **essay** = saggio
- **retreated** = ritirarsi
- **IQ test** = test d'intelligenza (intelligence quotient)
- **land developers** = imprenditori edili
- **decay** = degrado
- **claimed** = mietere vittime
- **surrendered** = arrendersi
- **coined** = coniare
- **convoluted** = contorta, intricata
- **wilfully** = intenzionalmente
- **deserve** = meritare
- **ruthlessness** = crudeltà, efferatezza

- **harmful** = dannose
- **parole** = libertà vigilata
- **advised against** = sconsigliare
- **Attorney General** = procuratore generale