



The Turner Diaries

Quick Profile

- **Author:** William Pierce (as Andrew Macdonald), leader of the neo-Nazi National Alliance
- **Published:** 1978
- **Publisher:** Previously, the book was only available through the National Alliance's National Vanguard Press, but Barricade Books, a small independent publisher, began publishing it in 1996.
- **Premise:** The diaries of Earl Turner, member of an underground white supremacist army, provide an inside account of an Aryan revolution that overturns the United States government in the near future.
- **Tone:** Lurid, violent, apocalyptic, misogynistic, racist and anti-Semitic
- **Notable sequence:** Turner's guerrilla unit detonates a homemade bomb at FBI headquarters, killing hundreds - a passage that came to be seen as foreshadowing, and as an inspiration to, Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh.
- **Influence:** One of the most widely read and cited books on the far-right; it has explicitly influenced, among others, The Order, the Aryan Republican Army, The New Order, Timothy McVeigh.
- **Timeline:** 1991 - Turner's diaries begin; 1993 - Turner's last entry, his successful suicide bombing of the Pentagon; 1999 - Aryan forces triumph, the New Era begins; 2099 - the narrator "publishes" Turner's diaries.

Introduction

The scene is chillingly familiar: a rented truck filled with cases of dynamite and sacks containing a mixture of ammonium nitrate fertilizer and heating oil blows up in front of a federal government building shortly after 9 a.m., killing hundreds of people.

Most people would recognize this as the deadliest domestic terrorist act in American history: the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. But before this bombing ever took place, it was first depicted in *The Turner Diaries* (1978), an apocalyptic, violently anti-Semitic and racist novel that has achieved cult status among far-right extremists.

Written by National Alliance leader William L. Pierce under the pseudonym Andrew Macdonald, *The Turner Diaries* tells the story of a white supremacist guerrilla army, the "Organization," that seeks to overthrow the American government as well as leading social institutions like the media and Hollywood -- known collectively as the "System." In the book's fictional foreword, an unknown narrator, speaking in a future Aryan republic that was formerly the United States, introduces the diaries of Earl Turner; Turner, the reader learns, was a soldier and martyr, a national folk hero, in the "Great Revolution" that overturned the System and began the "New Era." We are informed that his daily observations provide an inside account of the first two years of the Revolution, which began more than 100 years earlier, in the year 1991, and lasted eight years. (The foreword is dated "April 100," meaning 100 years into the New Era of Aryan rule, or 2099.)

Birth of the New World Order

It is 1991, or 8 BNE (Before the New Era). American society is in upheaval. Crime rates skyrocket as roving gangs of blacks and other nonwhites rape and pillage nearly at will. Inflation soars and the standard of living drops dramatically. Gasoline is rationed. Two years before, the Cohen Act outlawed private ownership of firearms in the United States; to enforce the ban, Jewish-run human rights groups employed gangs of black men to invade the homes of whites, confiscate

their firearms and brutally arrest and imprison the guilty parties -- 800,000 people are arrested -- in what are known as the Gun Raids. After being arrested and subsequently fired from his job in a laboratory, the 35-year-old Turner devotes all of his time to the work of his four-person "unit," which operates in coordination with, but independently of, other cells in the Organization (the cells are directed at a distance by an unseen Revolutionary Command). The diaries begin with the Organization's decision to move beyond its campaign of recruitment and planning to action. The target is clear:

If the White nations of the world had not allowed themselves to become subject to the Jew, to Jewish ideas, to the Jewish spirit, this war would not be necessary. We can hardly consider ourselves blameless. We can hardly say we had no choice, no chance to avoid the Jew's snare. We can hardly say we were not warned....

The people had finally had their fill of the Jews and their tricks....If the Organization survives this contest, no Jew will -- anywhere. We'll go to the Uttermost ends of the earth to hunt down the last of Satan's spawn.

On September 16, 1991, Organization units undertake acts of guerilla warfare and terrorism that set in motion the events that eventually lead to the overthrow of the System. Turner describes in lurid prose how, during ensuing weeks, he and his colleagues rob a liquor store for money (slitting the throat of the Jewish owner and knocking out his "fat, grotesque-looking" wife with a jar of kosher pickles), retrieve weapons stored in buried oil drums, plan assassinations and develop a scheme to bomb the F.B.I.'s headquarters. He goes into extensive detail about the merits of various explosives and his unit's laborious construction of a bomb.

One month after the start of the Revolution, Turner and his associates plant their device in a hijacked delivery truck, which they park in a subbasement loading

area at F.B.I. headquarters in Washington, D.C. Their precisely calibrated efforts prove successful -- 700 people are killed and the building is badly damaged:

At 9:15 yesterday morning our bomb went off in the F.B.I.'s national headquarters building...the damage is immense. We have certainly dis-rupted a major portion of the F.B.I.'s headquarters operations for at least the next several weeks...we gaped with a mixture of horror and elation at the devastation....

It is a heavy burden of responsibility for us to bear, since most of the victims of our bomb were only pawns who were no more committed to the sick philosophy or the racially destructive goals of the System than we are.

But there is no way we can destroy the System without hurting many thousands of innocent people....And if we don't destroy the System before it destroys us...our whole race will die.

Because of his loyalty and effectiveness, the Organization eventually selects Turner to join its elite inner circle of racial warriors known as "The Order." Meanwhile, the Revolution grows increasingly violent and widespread. Turner's unit is raided, he is arrested and tortured by Israeli military intelligence, escapes from jail and, in part because he failed to kill himself rather than be arrested, is told by the Order that he will have to attempt a suicide mission to become a full-fledged member of the quasi-religious cadre. In the period before he receives this final command, the insurgent Organization, rapidly gaining adherents across the nation, lynches tens of thousands of "race traitors," including liberal actors and politicians and white women who slept with black men, hanging them from utility poles with placards around their neck reading, "I defiled my race." From this moment -- "The Day of the Rope" -- the Revolution lurches into genocide.

Finally, Turner receives his suicide order. His last entry describes the mission with heroic self-disregard:

It's a one way trip to the Pentagon for me. The warhead is strapped into the front seat of the old Stearman [fighter plane] and rigged to detonate either on impact or when I flip a switch in the back seat. Hopefully, I'll be able to manage a low-level air burst directly over the center of the Pentagon. Failing that, I'll at least try to fly as close as I can before I'm shot down.

In an epilogue, the narrator explains that Turner's suicide bomb crippled the Pentagon and became a turning point in the Revolution. With the System's "principal military nerve center" destroyed, the Organization is able to begin destroying urban areas across the nation that were controlled by the enemy. As the Revolution's momentum grows, its mandate begins to extend to white populations and the nonwhite peril across the globe; we learn that white domination over the planet is ultimately achieved with nuclear bombs.

The Bible of the Right Wing

The Turner Diaries is probably the most widely read book among far-right extremists; many have cited it as the inspiration behind their terrorist organizing and activity. Hoping to bring about the Aryan uprising depicted in Pierce's novel, Robert Mathews, formerly a Pacific Northwest representative of Pierce's organization, helped found the 1980s white supremacist gang The Order. Mathews' efforts ended in a fatal shootout with F.B.I. agents in 1984, while other Order members, mostly past associates of the National Alliance and Aryan Nations, were convicted and sentenced to long prison terms for their crimes, which included murders, robberies, counterfeiting and the bombing of a synagogue.

More recently, the Aryan Republican Army, which committed 22 bank robberies and bombings across the Midwest between 1992 and 1996, cited *The Turner Diaries* as inspiration, as did The New Order, whose members were charged with conspiracy to possess and make machine guns. At the time of their indictment, an F.B.I. agent testified that the group planned to bomb the Anti-Defamation League's

New York headquarters, the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama, and the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles. It had also talked of bombing state capitols and post offices, and poisoning public water supplies with cyanide.

But *The Turner Diaries* exerted its most tragic influence on the mind of Timothy McVeigh. Days before he bombed the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people and wounding 500 others, McVeigh mailed a letter to his sister warning that "something big is going to happen," followed by a second envelope with clippings from *The Turner Diaries*. When she learned of her brother's arrest in connection with the bombing, McVeigh's sister burned the clippings.

F.B.I. agents also found a copy of a passage from *The Turner Diaries* in the car McVeigh drove on the day of the bombing. It read:

The real value of our attacks today lies in the psychological impact, not in the immediate casualties. For one thing, our efforts against the System gained immeasurably in credibility. More important, though, is what we taught the politicians and the bureaucrats. They learned today that not one of them is beyond our reach. They can huddle behind barbed wire and tanks in the city, or they can hide behind the concrete walls and alarm systems of their country estates, but we can still find them and kill them.

During the bombing trial, several of McVeigh's friends testified that he had sent them copies of Pierce's novel with notes encouraging them to read it. Testimony also showed that McVeigh sold *The Turner Diaries* and *Hunter*, Pierce's follow-up to *The Turner Diaries*, at weekend gun shows.

Pierce, who gained national prominence following the Oklahoma City bombing, repudiated McVeigh's attack, stating, "it's really shameful to kill a lot of people when there's no hope for accomplishing anything."