

Higher Man

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The Turner Diaries
by 'Andrew Macdonald'.

National Vanguard Books, 211 pp., \$12.95, May 1978, 0 937944 02 5

The authorities are always interested in the assassin's bookshelf. The Israeli police were quick to release the fact that Yigal Amir had a copy of *The Day of the Jackal*. Before Theodore Kaczynski, the likely 'Unabomber', had even been charged, the press had announced that one of his noms de guerre was 'Conrad' (the nom de plume of Teodor Korzeniowski) and that there was a copy of *The Secret Agent* on his bookshelf. In the Oklahoma bombing case, now being tried in Denver, the book in question is The Turner Diaries. The FBI, who have labelled William L. Pierce's prudently pseudonymous novel 'the bible of the racist right', didn't take long to leak the information that it accompanied Timothy McVeigh on his (alleged) bombing raid on 19 April 1995. Reference to The Turner Diaries was prominent in *Rage and Betrayal*, the highly prejudicial ABC programme of 12 April 1996, in which the newscaster Peter Jennings called McVeigh a 'monster' and cited passages from Pierce's book. Parallels between bomb-making in *The Turner Diaries* and by McVeigh were made much of in Joseph Hartzler's opening address to the jury. The only material evidence produced by the first witness for the prosecution, Charles Hanger, the state trooper who made the arrest, was the fact that, in addition to his gun and knife, McVeigh had in his yellow Mercury copies of a number of tendentious passages from The Turner Diaries (there was some conflict in press reports as to whether they were handwritten, xeroxed or merely highlighted in a copy of the book). Mention has been made of the book on virtually every day of the trial.

It is clear that McVeigh was infatuated with *The Turner Diaries* and equally clear that it is, prima facie, an incriminating book. According to a leaked 'confession', plausibly thought to have been acquired by the FBI while illegally bugging McVeigh's consultations with his defence attorneys, and subsequently published in *Playboy*, McVeigh came across Pierce's novel in 1987-8, just before he joined the US Army. It was, he recalls, a period when his 'views of the world expanded'. He denies, however, that it was the racism or the survivalist politics which attracted him: 'I read it as a gun-rights book.' Ten years ago McVeigh was apparently in the habit of selling *The Turner Diaries* (then retailing at \$10) half-price at gun shows, so keen was he to proselytise. One report has it that he ripped out and sent seven pages of the book to his young sister, Jennifer, just before the bombing. What she told Jennings was that her brother gave her the whole novel to read 'several years ago'. This is evidently the family line: 'I know he's read it, I've read it. A lot of people say it's a racist book. But the point of the book is not racism. The point is the Government taking control of people, taking their guns away.' In her testimony on 5 May Ms McVeigh confirmed on oath that she had read *The Turner Diaries* at her brother's repeated urgings. But now, as a principal prosecution witness (in return for immunity), she seemed less inclined to defend McVeigh's favourite novel.

You can buy *The Day of the Jackal* or *The Secret Agent* at any bookshop. *The Turner Diaries* was first published 19 years ago, but until 1996 it could only be readily acquired by mail order, from William Pierce's headquarters in West Virginia. As you would expect with a cult book, a limited number of copies of the illustrated first edition are still 'available' at not much under \$100. A sub-standard paperback, the current printing is exorbitantly priced at \$12.95 (plus \$3, P&P). At least \$10 of the purchase price represents a hefty subscription to Pierce's neo-Nazi National Alliance. National Vanguard Books, Pierce's publishing arm, claim that 198,000 copies had been sold by February 1995; after April that year sales must have made a meteoric ascent.

I don't think the book could be published in Britain without violating the Race Relations Act. Last year an above-ground American publisher, Barricade Books, acquired the rights and brought out a trade edition at \$12, tastefully timed to coincide with the anniversary of the explosion in the Murrah Building. There was outrage from the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee and the Wiesenthal Center and self-respecting bookshops have boycotted it. I haven't seen a copy anywhere: even survivalist bookshops seem to have run out. If you want *The Turner Diaries* and don't want to buy an Uzi at the same time, mail order is still the easiest way to get it.

The Turner Diaries takes the form of a posthumous memoir by a foot soldier in the 'Great Revolution' of 1991-9 (i.e. well in the future when Pierce wrote the book). Earl Turner, an ordinary Joe Q. Public American, is politicised by the Washington DC 'gun raids' of September 1991. These have been sanctioned by the 'Cohen Act'. Poses of deputised blacks (egged on by the Jewish-owned *Washington Post*) raid the homes of white people, seizing their weapons and violating the women (recent legislation has decriminalised rape and hard-drug use by African Americans).

Washington is now policed by 'swarthy, kinky-haired little Jewboys' who use the city's black underclass to advance 'Jewish interests', which means, principally, world domination by Israel, and a bipolar tyranny directed from the two great 'Jewish capitals', New York and Tel Aviv. For relaxation, Jews, 'this pestilence of the East', prey on Gentile women, selling them to white slavers after they have had their odious way with them. They dismember and devour Christian children in 'gruesome semitic rituals'.

Turner is rounded up after his trusty .357 revolver is discovered. On his release, he drifts into the Organisation, a radical right grouping dedicated to the overthrow of the System, as they call the federal government. The stakes are apocalyptically high: 'If we fail, God's Great Experiment will come to an end, and this planet will once again, as it did millions of years ago, move through the ether devoid of higher man.'

Before God's Great American Experiment can be fulfilled, however, material needs must be met. To raise funds for the Organisation Turner commits various acts of theft, targeting Jewish-owned liquor stores in particular – whose proprietors he murders. Turner also takes pleasure in killing 'white sluts' who have defiled their race. He teams up with an admirably unsluttish partner, Katherine, who was converted to the Organisation after her room-mate was found raped and killed by a black intruder.

Moving closer to the hard core of the Organisation, Turner is recruited to blow up the FBI national headquarters on Pennsylvania Avenue. It is to be done with a truck-bomb loaded with 44 100lb bags of ammonium nitrate fertiliser, sensitised with oil, triggered by 400lbs of dynamite. (In his *Playboy* 'confession', McVeigh recalled that his Ryder truck was loaded with 80 50lb bags of ammonium nitrate and 55 one-gallon barrels of nitromethane racing fuel, triggered by dynamite stolen from a quarry.) Turner parks his truck in the building's basement and the subsequent explosion kills 700 people. Turner is momentarily disturbed by the civilian casualties, but decides that 'there is no way we can destroy the System without hurting many thousands of innocent people ... if we don't cut this cancer out of our living flesh our whole race will die.'

Having proved his mettle, Turner is now inducted into the inner corps of the Organisation, the Order, a secret élite open only to those who have passed 'the test of the deed'. Meanwhile, the Organisation continues its campaign of terrorist disruption. On 20 April 1993 (Hitler's birthday, as the initiated reader will immediately apprehend), the Israeli Embassy in Washington is hit by heavy mortars, and 300 people are killed. 'Jews, your day is coming!' Turner exults on hearing the news.

Their day comes a few months later. The Organisation seizes Vandenberg Air Force Base on the West Coast, and re-targets its missiles on New York and Tel Aviv. Under this nuclear shield, a white Aryan enclave is created. Seven million blacks and Chicanos ('mestizos') are transported to the Californian border, and decanted into the eastern territory still held by the System. Hundreds of thousands of blacks (who have reverted to cannibalism) are marched into the desert, and executed. All Jews are summarily shot, clubbed or lynched.

There follows the Day of the Rope (1 August 1993), the great purification by terror of the white population. It is 'a grim and bloody time, but' – again – 'an unavoidable one'. At every intersection in Los Angeles, there hangs a corpse bearing one of two placards: 'I betrayed my race' (for traitors), and 'I defiled my race' (for women 'who were married to or living with blacks, with Jews or other non-white males').

The struggle has reached a critical juncture: 'Now it was either the Jews or the white race, and everyone knew the game was for keeps.' Katherine has been killed in a shoot-out with a black would-be rapist. In a cunning triple strike, the Order nukes Israel, New York and the Soviet Union, simultaneously wiping out the Red and Jewish evil empires. In the Middle East, Arab hordes swarm across the borders of 'occupied Palestine ... within a week the throat of the last Jewish survivor in the last kibbutz and in the last smoking ruin of Tel Aviv had been cut.' 'Anti-Jewish riots' break out in all the capitals of Europe. It is 'the final settlement of the account between our two races'.

There are still some loose ends to be tied up. On 9 November 1993 (marked ever after as the Day of Martyrs), Turner takes off on a suicide mission. He flies a nuke-bearing converted crop-duster on a kamikaze raid on the Pentagon, the System's last surviving nerve centre. An epilogue records the success of his mission and briefly out-

lines the measures then taken by the triumphant New Order. China is carpeted by a nuclear bombardment which leaves it the Great Eastern Waste. All blacks in Africa are exterminated, and the continent is given over to the Afrikaners. Only fifty million Americans have survived, but the nation is at last racially pure. All this is achieved ‘in the year 1999, according to the chronology of the Old Era – just 110 years after the birth of the Great One’ (Adolf Hitler, 1889-1945). I suppose you could say with the McVeighs that it’s a novel about gun control, but I think that any fair-minded reader would have to concede a smidgin of racism in the later sections of the narrative. One could see *The Turner Diaries* as the even more unacceptable face of Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilisations* with its prophecies of ‘tribal conflict on a global scale’. Whatever else, the routinely anodyne descriptions of Pierce’s novel in the American press as ‘an anti-government tract’ do the public a disservice. *The Turner Diaries* is not the work of a Holocaust-denier (although Pierce gives us plenty of that) so much as a would-be Holocaust-repeater. One has to assume either that the press corps at Denver hasn’t read the book or that they don’t want to sidetrack an already fragile prosecution case by outlining the book’s rabidly Nazi contents.

The Turner Diaries was first issued under the pseudonym ‘Andrew Macdonald’. William Luther Pierce, a resolutely secretive figure, was born on 11 September 1933, in Atlanta, Georgia. He was evidently brought up in the South-West, and graduated BA from Rice in 1955. He spent the year 1955-6 at Caltech, as a graduate student in physics. This was the period when the recently formed John Birch Society was active in San Marino, a mile or two away from the Caltech campus. Pierce was evidently much impressed by a Birchite novel circulating at the time, *The Franklin Papers*, whose plot anticipates *The Turner Diaries*. Both novels derive from Jack London’s ‘revolutionary’s memoir’, *The Iron Heel*. National Vanguard Books currently offers in its catalogue an edition of *The Iron Heel*, impudently described as ‘London’s version of *The Turner Diaries*’. London was, it’s explained, ‘a National Socialist before his time’.

Pierce moved on from Caltech to Colorado, where he acquired a PhD in physics in 1962. He taught at Oregon State University from 1962 to 1965, before giving up his academic career ‘to devote himself to the service of his people’. In the mid-Sixties he was an aide to George Lincoln Rockwell, editing the American Nazi Party’s magazine, *National Socialist World*. In late 1967 the ‘American Führer’ (as Rockwell called himself) was assassinated by a disaffected comrade. In 1970, Pierce broke away from the American Nazi Party to form the National Youth Alliance, a radical-right organisation restricted to members under 30 (Pierce was 37) and based in Virginia. It was a time when, as Pierce’s home page on the World Wide Web puts it, ‘Jews and others – sometimes under the guise of opposition to the Vietnam War – were organising violent demonstrations in the streets of America’s cities and calling for the destruction of White Society.’

Pierce was active on behalf of George Wallace’s American Independence Party in the Presidential campaign of 1972, but Wallace in his turn was shot and crippled by a would-be assassin. It was a low period for American neo-Nazis. Quite apart from the

fact that all their leaders were being rubbed out or neutralised by the FBI's dirty, and highly effective, Counter-Intelligence Program, no one was taking any notice of them. As Pierce's page on the Web candidly admits, 'NYA's public activities were too small to make a significant impact on current events, government policies or the public's consciousness.'

In February 1974, Pierce re-formed his organisation into the National Alliance, and established a 'religious entity' (probably for tax purposes: Pierce, true to his Nazi roots, has generally distanced himself from the extremist theology of the Christian Right) called the Cosmotheist Community Church on a 346-acre compound in West Virginia. In May 1978, he set up the National Vanguard Press. Its flagship volume was *The Turner Diaries*, which had already been serialised in the Alliance's house magazine, *Attack!*, between January 1975 and April 1978. Three thousand copies of the first edition were printed. A second edition (presumably another 3000 copies) was printed but had not sold out by 1985.

At this point the novel received a huge boost. An Aryan Nation group under the leadership of Robert ('Bob') Jay Matthews embarked on a series of terrorist actions against what they called ZOG, the Zionist Occupation Government, culminating, in June 1984, in the assassination of the Denver talk-show host, Alan Berg ('a pushy Jew'). Matthews had been a member of Pierce's National Alliance until the late Seventies, and his group, calling themselves the Order, had taken *The Turner Diaries* as the blueprint for their campaign of terror. The subsequent relationship between Matthews and Pierce isn't clear, but in an interview with the *Denver Post* in May 1996 Pierce claimed that beyond an exchange of 'correspondence', well before the Order's robbery, bombings and murder spree, there was no communication. 'I don't really have any report from him as to what his motivation was,' he said of his former acolyte.

The trial of the surviving members of the Order in September 1985 (Matthews had been killed in a shoot-out with the FBI the previous December) attracted huge publicity. Two Hollywood films were made after Berg's murder: Costa-Gavras's *Betrayed*, and Eric Bogosian's *Talk Radio*. A collateral effect was that *The Turner Diaries* became a bestseller. There were five reprintings of the novel between 1985 and 1995, representing some 190,000 sales and more than \$2 million in revenue for the National Alliance.

The up-turn in the sales of *The Turner Diaries* bankrolled an expansion in the National Alliance's (now called the National Vanguard) publishing programme. Pierce brought out *Hunter*, his second novel (again under the name of 'Andrew Macdonald'), in 1989. The hero, Oscar Yeager (*Jaeger* is German for 'hunter'), is a Washington yuppie who turns vigilante, preying on the city's degenerates' (gays, blacks and, inevitably, Jews). *Hunter* sells at a modest \$8.95. The National Vanguard's other lead fiction title is Randolph O. Calverhall's *The Serpent's Tail* (1991, \$9.95), the story of how the SS survives underground until the mid-21st century, and finally succeeds in setting up a fourth Reich – 'The good guys win sometimes,' as the blurb puts it. By the early Nineties, the press was marketing audio cassettes: for \$12, postage included, you can

buy Dr William L. Pierce's spoken thoughts on 'Yiddishkeit Pathology: Jewish Influence on American Mass Culture'. A must is 'Feminism: The Great Destroyer' – 'When homosexuals come out of the closet and women go into politics, empires crumble.' In December 1991 the National Vanguard Press launched its *American Dissident Voices* on Radio AM and, in 1993, its New World Order Comix, which aim to 'instil a sense of racial identity and pride' into America's young. In 1995, the Press put out *Dresden's Call of Blood*, which opens with a rock version of the 'Horst Wessel Song' and features a musical adaptation of the *Diaries*' Day of the Rope. According to the Alliance's advertising material, 'recruitment rates at the end of 1992 were 30 times what they had been in early 1989.' In short, Pierce's organisation is now a main player in the congeries of neo-Nazi, Identity Christianity, Posse Comitatus, Church of the Creator and KKK fringe groups that ferment on the radical right of the American political spectrum. His success has been a direct outcome of the success of *The Turner Diaries*.

What exactly was McVeigh's relationship with Pierce? Is it likely that someone who was selling copies of *The Turner Diaries* in bulk, and cut-price, at gun shows in the late Eighties would not have made some attempt at a formal association with the National Alliance, especially when the Alliance was aggressively recruiting young malcontents? Pierce was very quick to distance himself from McVeigh after the arrest. Despite his distrust of the 'controlled' press, he issued a statement through the *Denver Post* to the effect that he had never met McVeigh and that McVeigh had never been a member of the Alliance. Whoever bombed the Murrah Building, Pierce conceded, might have been influenced by his novel: 'but what happened in Oklahoma made little political sense because it was not sustained.' One day, Pierce added, 'there will be real organised terrorism – aimed at bringing down the government.' In subsequent *Dissident Voices* commentary on Oklahoma, Pierce dismissed the bombing as an act of 'private terrorism'. Nothing to do with his organisation – or the organised action it would one day sponsor. None the less, in a speech given in May 1996, Morris Dees, chief trial counsel for the Southern Poverty Law Center (a long-time antagonist of Pierce's), claimed that McVeigh, or someone using his calling card, made eight phone calls to the National Alliance office in Fort Mohave, Arizona on 5 and 6 April 1995 'less than two weeks before the bombing'. Dees was implying that the attack on the Murrah Building was, like Turner's bombing of the FBI building, a 'test of the deed'. In response Pierce poured scorn on Dees as a fanatical publicity-seeker.

The prosecution team in Denver (and behind them the FBI) may have caused difficulties for themselves by putting so much weight on *The Turner Diaries* in their case against McVeigh. As Gerry Spence (the lawyer who acted on behalf of the Weaver family after the FBI shootings at Ruby Ridge) has pointed out, what a person reads or what books they own proves absolutely nothing and should be inadmissible in any court of law. It is clear that McVeigh's fascination with *The Turner Diaries* goes back almost a decade: why, if the novel was his main inspiration, did he wait so long to act? What were *you* reading in 1987, and how did it affect your behaviour in 1995? So he had a copy of a novel in his car, so what?

More damagingly, if you assume that *The Turner Diaries* was McVeigh's blueprint, you have to deal with the awkward fact that the novel does not advocate 'private terrorism', but highly organised, rigidly disciplined group terrorism. The prosecution case is that McVeigh was a lone wolf – a one-man, Rambo-style destroyer. There is no sanction for such action in *The Turner Diaries* (there is in *Hunter*, but no one has connected McVeigh with that novel). This touches on the weakest part of the prosecution case. Clearly they have assembled the 'lone wolf' theory, first because they could not conclusively identify the 'John Doe 2', who has persistently been alluded to by witnesses; and second, because even if they could nail one of McVeigh's known accomplices as 'John Doe 2', it is notoriously difficult to make a charge of first-degree murder stick against two or more perpetrators acting collaboratively. This is why the Menendez brothers were tried separately. Had they been tried jointly, each could have pointed at the other and said: 'he pulled the trigger, not me.' So, too, if McVeigh were known to have a co-driving, co-loading, co-parking outside the Murrah Building accomplice, it would be almost impossible to get the death sentence that Clinton was the first to demand.

Common sense suggests that McVeigh did not load three tons of explosive into the truck single-handed. At least one eye-witness reports that the driver who walked away from the Ryder vehicle was short and dark, not fair and lanky like McVeigh. In his *Playboy* 'confession' McVeigh denied that there was a 'John Doe 2' with him in the truck, although he reportedly failed this question on his FBI lie-detector test. In his statement to the *Denver Post*, Pierce made what looks like a shrewdly knowledgeable assumption: 'I predict that there will be more of this sort of domestic terrorist activity just because the basic irritants that presumably prompted McVeigh and the others are still here and getting worse.' Whatever the outcome of the trial, it seems unlikely that it will reveal who those 'others' were.

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