



The Most Dangerous Man in America: Timothy Leary, Richard Nixon and the Hunt for the Fugitive King of LSD

Bill Minutaglio , Steven L. Davis

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From Bill Minutaglio and Steven L. Davis, authors of the PEN Center USA award-winning *Dallas 1963*, comes a madcap narrative about Timothy Leary's daring prison escape and run from the law.

On the moonlit evening of September 12, 1970, an ex-Harvard professor with a genius I.Q. studies a twelve-foot high fence topped with barbed wire. A few months earlier, Dr. Timothy Leary, the High Priest of LSD, had been running a gleeful campaign for California governor against Ronald Reagan. Now, Leary is six months into a ten-year prison sentence for the crime of possessing two marijuana cigarettes.

Aided by the radical Weather Underground, Leary's escape from prison is the counterculture's union of "dope and dynamite," aimed at sparking a revolution and overthrowing the government. Inside the Oval Office, President Richard Nixon drinks his way through sleepless nights as he expands the war in Vietnam and plots to unleash the United States government against his ever-expanding list of domestic enemies. Antiwar demonstrators are massing by the tens of thousands; homemade bombs are exploding everywhere; Black Panther leaders are threatening to burn down the White House; and all the while Nixon obsesses over tracking down Timothy Leary, whom he has branded "the most dangerous man in America."

Based on freshly uncovered primary sources and new firsthand interviews, **THE MOST DANGEROUS MAN IN AMERICA** is an American thriller that takes readers along for the gonzo ride of a lifetime. Spanning twenty-eight months, President Nixon's careening, global manhunt for Dr. Timothy Leary winds its way among homegrown radicals, European aristocrats, a Black Panther outpost in Algeria, an international arms dealer, hash-smuggling hippies from the Brotherhood of Eternal Love, and secret agents on four continents, culminating in one of the trippiest journeys through the American counterculture.

The Most Dangerous Man in America: Timothy Leary, Richard Nixon and the Hunt for the Fugitive King of LSD Details

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From Reader Review The Most Dangerous Man in America: Timothy Leary, Richard Nixon and the Hunt for the Fugitive King of LSD for online ebook

Jason MARTIN says

A romp through Nixonian might and Leary escapism

Erik says

A fascinating look into the 60s counterculture. We all know of Timothy Leary (if only from the mention in the Moody Blues song) as the "Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out" Harvard psychologist who became the spokesman for LSD use. What surprised me though, was his alignment with the violently radical elements of that counterculture (the Weathermen/Weather Underground, Black Panthers, etc) during his years on the run.

Nadine says

I really enjoyed this book, which, if it were fiction, would be too crazy to be believable. I knew little to nothing about Timothy Leary, his years on the lam, or Nixon's obsession with him. The book is easy to read and is quite a compelling madcap caper around the world.

Reed says

History, spirituality, philosophy, (geo)politics, & music all written in a white knuckle-like thriller style. With gripping storytelling of the exploits of Timothy Leary & Richard Nixon, I found this book very hard to put down. It kept me up way past my bedtime on several occasions, which depending on your perspective, can be either a good or bad thing. Even though I had considered myself fairly exposed to the counterculture of the early 70s through my love of the era's music and characters, I still learned a ton reading this book. Highly recommended, especially if you are a fan of the excesses of hippiedom.

Classify this on the same part of the bookshelf as Hell's Angels, Electric Kool Aid Acid Test, 1971, & Eat the Document.

Niklas Pivic says

From the start, it's evident that the authors of this book liked Timothy Leary. One of them actually met him, but even though this book is no real hagiography but a deep dip into one part of Leary's life—from where he was jailed, called "the most dangerous man in America" by Nixon, to his fleeing the USA, and later going back—it's a wild 28-month-long ride based on a lot of research.

The authors never got the information they asked for from the US government, based on the Freedom of

Information Act; not even Leary himself received it when asking for it in the later part of his life. Still, lots of records were found in places such as the New York Library, which the authors used to piece together an adequate picture.

As such, this is a chronological fly-on-the-wall tome which is also an easy read. Sentences glide past, written in a kind of 1970s vernacular, which feels suitable to the entire atmosphere, even when dealing with the near-psychotic Nixon, hell bent on catching Leary probably as a way of turning attention away from what he did to Vietnam and the USA at the time, Kent State, Watergate, et cetera.

It's fun to read of how Leary's intelligence turned Nixon's attempts to get him upside down:

The government convicted him for failing to pay the federal marijuana tax, sentencing him to thirty years in prison. But Leary remained free on bond while he appealed, fighting all the way to the Supreme Court. In *Leary v. United States*, he won unanimously, defeating the Nixon Administration's lawyers and striking down key marijuana laws. He celebrated his victory by declaring he would challenge Ronald Reagan in the California gubernatorial election. "Don't you think I've had more experience than Ronnie?" Leary joked to reporters. He promised to legalize pot, selling it through officially sanctioned stores with the tax revenues going into state coffers. He said he would never live in the governor's mansion—instead he would pitch a teepee on the front lawn and conduct the state's business from there. His campaign slogan, *Come Together, Join the Party*, inspired John Lennon to write a song for him that the Beatles recorded as "Come Together."

It's also easy to see Leary's charisma:

"Of the great men of the past whom I hold up as models," he tells people, "almost every one of them has been either imprisoned or threatened with imprisonment for their spiritual beliefs: Gandhi, Jesus, Socrates, Lao-tse... I have absolutely no fear of imprisonment... I know that the only real prisons are internal."

Then, there's the start of The Weathermen Underground (later known as The Weather Underground):

The shadowy revolutionary organization that went underground after that deadly townhouse explosion in Greenwich Village has just issued a "Declaration of a State of War" on Richard Nixon: This is the first communication from the Weatherman Underground. All over the world, people fighting Amerikan imperialism look to Amerika's youth to use our strategic position behind enemy lines to join forces in the destruction of the empire... We've known that our job is to lead white kids into armed revolution... Revolutionary violence is the only way... Guns and grass are united in the youth underground. Freaks are revolutionaries and revolutionaries are freaks... Within the next 14 days we will attack a symbol or institution of Amerikan injustice. This Sunday, there are also news reports that in Ames, Iowa, the FBI has been called in to help figure out who detonated a massive dynamite bomb inside city hall that injured nine people and blew up portions of the adjacent police headquarters.

[...]

More bombs are erupting across the country, from New York to Chicago to Oakland. The Weathermen, the tight-knit clique of former campus leaders who have gone underground as guerrilla revolutionaries, are careening toward notoriety. They've taken their name from Bob Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues"—"you don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows"—and are led by Bernardine Dohrn and Bill Ayers. Dohrn is a twenty-eight-year-old with a law degree from the University of Chicago. Raised in an upper-middle-class Milwaukee suburb, she was a dance student and high school cheerleader before turning to revolutionary terrorism. Her coleader, Ayers, is the twenty-five-year-old son of the president of Commonwealth Edison in Chicago. When people call him a rich radical, Ayers bristles: "Kill all the rich people. Break up their cars and apartments. Bring the revolution home, kill your parents, that's where it's really at."

[...]

On July 26, an explosion blows apart a sculpture of a Nike Ajax missile housed inside the Presidio, the iconic army base in San Francisco. The Weathermen issue a new communiqué: "Today we attack with rocks, riots and bombs the greatest killer pig ever known to man—Amerikan imperialism." They sneer at Nixon's blustery attorney general, John Mitchell, who has been targeting them: "To General Mitchell we say: Don't look for us, Dog; we'll find you first." A few hours later, at 3:30 a.m., a pipe bomb explodes in the front lobby of the Bank of America in the heart of Wall Street. Chunks of marble and glass from the doors rocket into the street. Twenty minutes after the bomb goes off, the New York Daily News receives a phone call: "This is a Weatherman. Listen close. I'll only say it once. We have just bombed the Bank of America... Tell John Mitchell that no matter what he does, we cannot be stopped."

I won't go to deep into the innards of the book as that would be spoiling it all, but there's also a lovely interview with the authors of this book as held by a representative of The New York Public Library: <http://traffic.libsyn.com/newyorkpubl...> - which I strongly recommend.

All in all, this is a *wild* ride through corruption, international getaways, Nixon, The Black Panthers, international terrorism, war, psychedelics, philosophy, adventure, love, and life in total. Firmly recommended.

Ken Roberts says

What a ride! I was there, but Davis and Minutaglio showed what I had missed. A fast-paced, compelling tale of drugs and paranoia, told from inside the minds of Leary and Nixon. This book proves that fact can definitely be stranger than fiction.

David Ward says

[The Most Dangerous Man in America: Timothy Leary, Richard Nixon and the Hunt for the Fugitive King of LSD](#) by Bill Minutaglio & Steven L. Davis (Twelve 2018) (150.92). The two men named in the title, Dr. Timothy Leary and President Richard M. Nixon, represented absolute polar opposite positions and views in the America of the 1960's. "Tricky Dick" Nixon was a staunch law and order republican. He greatly escalated America's involvement in Southeast Asia by wholeheartedly endorsing the war in Vietnam. And he

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the Hunt for the Fu...

hated America's counterculture – those peace loving marijuana smoking and LSD tripping youngsters who didn't know the value of a dollar or of a hard day's work, for that matter.

Dr. Timothy Leary was a tenured Harvard Professor who fell in love with hallucinogenic drugs. He experimented with the popular hallucinogens of the day, but his principal interest became the drug LSD. "Turn on, Tune in, and Drop Out" became Leary's mantra. He was known as "The High Priest of LSD". President Richard Nixon found in Dr. Leary everything he despised in a person both politically and individually.

This is a rollicking tale of Nixon's war on Timothy Leary with Leary serving as a stand-in for the entire youth counterculture. Leary was a federal fugitive on the run from the CIA and Nixon's other henchmen during the heart of this story. Many of the most famous figures from the Sixties appear: The Brotherhood of Eternal Love (hashish smugglers and LSD chemists extraordinaire), the Black Panther Party (featuring Huey Newton and Eldridge Cleaver), and The Weathermen represent a few of the iconic Sixties players who figure into this story.

Once again it appears that the hippies eventually won. Agreed? My rating: 7/10, finished 9/8/18.

Patrick says

This was very interesting for the light it sheds on Leary, Eldridge Cleaver, and "the movement" in general.

The parallel story of Nixon is not particularly revelatory. For every page of Nixon there are four of Leary. Nixon wanted Leary captured and returned to the U.S. We get it.

Pretty much everyone in this saga is a horrible person, so there's no rooting interest.

Worth a look.

Silvio111 says

A totally outrageous story about Timothy Leary on the lam after his prison break in 1970. Supported by both the Weathermen and the hippies as well as a radical (yet self-serving?) California lawyer, Leary fled to Algeria to the "American Embassy" of Eldridge Cleaver's branch of the Black Panthers, and it just gets crazier from there.

I was living in a college bubble in rural New England at the time all this was taking place and had no idea.

The most interesting part of all this to me was the fact that Leary, who apparently dropped acid every day, was able to endure several years of this intrigue, having to flee at a moment's notice, often every few weeks or months, all the while putting up with the patriarchal and strong-man tactics of Cleaver, hippie/druggie hangers-on, and desperate, ongoing pleas to all his friends and supporters for money. I am surprised he did not have a nervous breakdown. But he seemed to dwell in a world of his own.

His wives and girlfriends had a harder time of it. It was quite illuminating to read about how when female members of the "revolution" (Weather Underground members) visited Cleaver, they were relegated to the kitchen with the other women in the Algiers "American Embassy."

No wonder the third wave of the feminist movement sprang from the anti-war movement of the '70s!

Wes Ferguson says

This was a really fun and fast-paced nonfiction read from a wild time in American history that I had not known much about, but that has parallels to our own era of progressive protests and rightwing skullduggery. It's obvious the authors did a ton of research. Dr. Tim Leary comes to life as a colorful character whose appetite for sex, drugs and (above all) the spotlight put him in the crosshairs of President Richard Nixon, who grows increasingly deranged as the globe-trotting fugitive Leary eludes the American government's best efforts to capture him.

Gerard Villegas says

Dubbed by Richard Nixon as "The Most Dangerous Man in America", former psychologist and drug advocate Timothy Leary became the scapegoat of the president during the late 60's and early 70's as the poster-child for an anti-drug campaign. Leary, a provocateur of LSD and it's affects on the mind, was convicted of drug possession of marijuana and escaped as a fugitive overseas where he became both a martyr, folk hero, and wanted man among the public of the time period.

To understand Leary's contribution in the drug culture is to understand an era of civil unrest. Disenchanted with the American government due to the county's involvement in Vietnam, the Cuban missile crisis, our relationship with the Middle East, and the dissolution of racial equality, gender, and faith in the country gave way for radical revolution groups to rise up. From the Black Panthers, the Symbionese Liberation Army, and extremist hippie drug culture, President Nixon had a lot of on his plate to deal with during his administration and what better way than to set an example by targeting a well-known drug marketer like Timothy Leary.

However, Leary found himself way over his head. Naïve and not a follower of any political groups, his involvement overseas first in Algier and later in Afghanistan only made him a useless symbol to promote whatever revolutionary group's agenda. This became apparent when he was recaptured, returned to the U. S. and cooperated with the police to name all political radicals.

The book itself provides an interesting perspective of a moment in history where there was disorganization and plenty of specialty groups attempting to be heard. Sadly, Leary's role is regulated to one of a figurehead than an actual significant plater of America's restless conflicts among the revolutionary groups. The book tended to ramble with Leary simply lost and confused as he encounters these organizations and became way over his head. For those wanting a more concise understanding of this period, this does not provide a clear, depth picture.

It's a simply an okay read.

J.S. Green says

Timothy Leary, a figurehead of the hippie and drug counterculture in the 1960s who famously encouraged youth to "turn on, tune in, drop out," managed to escape from a minimum security prison in California by dangling from a telephone wire. With the help of the Weathermen, a radical group advocating violent revolution yet who mostly blew up a bunch of government toilets, he made his way out of the country and

landed in Algeria, where he was taken in by the Black Panthers in exile. Add in Richard Nixon, who in an effort to distract the public from Vietnam and Watergate called Leary "The most dangerous man in America," and you've got a stranger than fiction tale from the early years of the 1970s.

All this happened before I was even in kindergarten, so while I'd heard of Timothy Leary (not sure where), I knew nothing about him. I knew only a little about the Black Panthers and the Weathermen (later the Weather Underground), but this is a fascinating and often head-shaking account of Leary's life on the lam, as he moves from California to Washington, to Alergia, to Switzerland, to Beirut, to... geez, it got a little hard to follow. The book is written in a very readable style rather than scholarly, and is often told in present-tense (which I found a bit annoying). It's also clear that Leary, the "King of LSD" and "Pope of Dope," is a HERO in this book. Although we read occasionally of the dangerous effects the drug had on some people who took it, drug use in general is viewed in a fairly positive or at least benign light in the book and the negatives are mostly swept aside. If you're from the "Sixties" you might like this even more than those of us from the "Just Say No" generation, but it's still a fun and interesting read. (I rec'd a free copy of the book from the publisher.)

Marti says

I am laughing myself silly, wondering if anything like the events in this book could possibly occur today? I am guessing that with the advances in airport security and surveillance, the answer is no. I am also wondering how I was largely unaware of the details of the story because the paparazzi were present at almost every stop of this strange trip (pun intended).

It seems to me that, after escaping prison, Leary was able to evade the long arm of the U.S. Government, only because the rest of the world regarded Richard Nixon as a war criminal. It's the reason Algeria set the Black Panthers up in a luxurious embassy in their capital city. Through the intervention of The Weathermen and other radical underground lawyers, Leary was allowed to stay in Algeria (in order to do that he had to swear allegiance to "violent revolution," which was not really his bag). However, the whole thing quickly fell apart because Eldridge Cleaver was against the use of LSD, and never believed that Leary's brand of Quixotic silliness would have the desired effect of toppling "Babylon" (which is how he referred to America). A series of fiascos meant to establish Leary's revolutionary credibility -- including a botched mission to Beirut to meet with the PLO, which led to his becoming a prisoner of the increasingly paranoid and tyrannical Cleaver -- ended with his expulsion from the country.

Fortunately, a speaking engagement in Denmark opened up. However, a fortuitous phone call en route to the conference from Switzerland, revealed a trap. Instead of boarding the next flight, he fled the airport, using the false passport he obtained from the Weathermen back in California. Having no cash, and his only asset, the potential for a lucrative book deal, he went to the address provided by the tipster. Thus he spent several months as a sort of court jester to a series of debauched jet setters, who revolved around a shady character who resembled Dr. Goldfinger of the Bond films. The deal was pretty simple. Goldfinger will bribe Swiss police if Leary signs over 80% of future book royalties. But even Goldfinger's protection was not always enough (the C.I.A. were relentless in encouraging prominent citizens to write letters to authorities denouncing the presence of an international criminal in their midst). Enter the Brotherhood Of Eternal Love, Leary's devoted disciples, who could be relied upon to magically slip through heavily guarded airports with cash and thousands of hits of Orange Sunshine.

The situation clearly was not sustainable and it all came crashing down eventually, ending with Leary's illegal capture in Afghanistan by U.S. agents. This was not how it was supposed to end. After all, the King of Afghanistan's nephew -- who was fond of Mod suits and Beatle boots -- was a friend of Leary's. What

happened afterward could not happen here again in a million years. I find it hard to believe Nixon really regarded Leary as all that dangerous, but his capture was undoubtedly good for his law and order stance. There is a transcript included of an actual conversation between Art Linkletter and Nixon on the relative merits of alcohol versus marijuana, which sounded more like a conversation between Beavis and Butthead. At the very least, I always thought Nixon was smarter than that.

Bob Schnell says

"The Most Dangerous Man in America" by Bill Minutaglio is one of the craziest true stories I've read about the time of Nixon where Nixon is one of the more sane people involved. It is the story of Timothy Leary on the run from American justice after escaping from prison and being declared public enemy number one. Helped along the way by hippies, Black Panthers, sympathetic governments and even suspected arms dealers, Leary's search for a safe haven is an international version of It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World. And he's dropping acid and smoking hash almost the entire time. The author presents the story in an entertaining manner and you'll laugh out loud at situations that would otherwise seem quite serious. It was a different time and we sure could use a jester like Dr. Leary these days.

John says

A fascinating look at a brief period in the life of LSD prophet Timothy Leary, when he escaped from a California prison, went to Algeria (as an unwelcome guest of the Eldridge Cleaver and the Black Panthers), then Switzerland, then Afghanistan, before finally being extradited. Good coverage also of Nixon's response. Ultimately, in my opinion, nobody comes out looking good at the end. While I was sympathetic to the unfairness of Leary's harsh sentence, he later wore out his welcome in every country he visited. The idea of keeping a low profile as a fugitive was a concept unknown to him, and his egoism and unconcern for others in my opinion was appalling. Loose ends are wrapped up at the end for those who want to know the rest of the story to the present.

I listened to this book on Audible. Unfortunately, there was no narration of any of the Bibliographic material. I hope it exists because otherwise I would question how the authors could recreate in such detail the daily events during this period. I have been unable to get to a library to check out a paper version of the book for this. I don't know why Audible often omits this; you don't need to read every footnote and book consulted, but some statement at the end would help.

Fun fact: at around the same time Nixon set up his taping system, Eldridge Cleaver set up his.
