

How to Save France?

By Bruce Bawer

In 2013, I wrote here about a new French bestseller, *La France Orange Mécanique* (*France Clockwork Orange*). In his book, the author, who adopted the pseudonym Laurent Obertone, did something very simple but also very powerful: looking past France's national media, which, then as now, routinely either ignored or whitewashed or invented excuses for Muslim crime in that country, he examined the crime reports in countless local and regional media organs, all of which, it turned out, added up to a horrific picture of what Obertone described as a "new type of ultra-violent crime," a "violence of conquest," that had, it was clear, transformed what had once been a peaceful country into a veritable war zone.



But Obertone did more than quote crime reports. He served up a stern *j'accuse*: instead of taking Islamic violence seriously

and responding to it with shows of strength, French authorities, he charged, routinely reacted with shows of extraordinary tolerance, because they equated tolerance with virtue, even as they considered it racist or Islamophobic or fascistic to criticize or judge or even acknowledge the sheer barbarity of even the most brutal Muslim offenses.

Obertone has now come out with a new book, and it has the

simplest and bluntest of titles: *Guerre* – which in English, of course, is *War*. Divided into three sections, it's several things in one: a snapshot (and unsparing analysis) of the contemporary French state, a self-help book, a manifesto, a training manual, a pep talk. His message is stark, his tone acidly cynical. France, he asserts, is governed by men and women whose first loyalty is not to the welfare and security of the French people but to a set of "progressive" values – none of which serves the best interests of the general public – and to their own power, which enables them to institutionalize these values no matter how many French citizens find them appalling. In their devotion to and promotion of these values, these political elites enjoy the full support of the country's legacy media, the cultural establishment, and the academy. Taken together, these factions make up what Obertone calls "The Sect."

More gifted, maintains Obertone, at the art of propaganda than Goebbels himself, The Sect uses terms like "humanism," "progress," "diversity," and "social justice" to mask what is essentially a totalitarian agenda, a "moral hegemony," and a truckful of preposterous propositions – from transgender ideology and Critical Race Theory to claims that (for example) Greta Thunberg is a heroine and author Thomas Piketty (who preaches wealth redistribution) is a serious economist. Meanwhile, the Sect flatly denies facts that are staring every Frenchman in the face, not least the objective reality of the Great Replacement – that is, the gradual transformation of the French Republic into a sharia state.

In other words, things are pretty much the same in France as they are in the U.S. and elsewhere in the Western world. We all knew this already, of course, but part of what makes Obertone's book valuable is the forceful reminder that those of us who have no taste for the tyrannical impulses of America's left-wing establishment are facing not just a national but a global enemy. Another reason why *Guerre* is

important is that Obertone doesn't pull his punches. While Democratic Party leaders and MSNBC talking heads don't hesitate to spread the most outrageous lies about their opponents, equating Trump with Hitler and the MAGA movement with the Nazi Party, all too many prominent members of the liberty-loving resistance in the U.S. are loath, when talking about our would-be masters, even to call a spade a spade.

I've heard high-profile Trump supporters, for example, lament his lack of "decorum" in dealing with the legacy media – even though the legacy media severely damaged his term in the White House by pushing the absurd Russia hoax and unfairly affected the 2020 election results by dismissing the Hunter Biden laptop as fake news. J.D. Vance's readiness, in interviews with dishonest media brokers, to call them out expertly on their shameless perfidy, their endless hoaxes, their outrageous spinning (or outright denial) of the facts, is as rare as it is refreshing. The MAGA movement needs more of that – a lot more. The blinkered sheep who get their "news" from Rachel Maddow and *The View* will never glance at a website like FrontPage Magazine – unless Trump supporters, on the intermittent occasions when they're actually invited onto CNN, MSNBC, or one of the broadcast networks (the purpose always being to portray them as threats to "our democracy") make the most of these opportunities by going in, Vance-like, for the kill, and thereby open at least a few people's eyes.

Which brings us to what Obertone does in *Guerre*. When Vance asked ABC's Martha Radditz "Do you hear yourself?", he was responding to her brazen attempt to downplay the takeover by Venezuelan criminal gangs of several apartment complexes in Aurora, Colorado. As Vance quite rightly pointed out, Radditz seemed to be more put out by the specific wording of Trump's comments about this takeover than by the takeover itself. Needless to say, her approach was par for the course for the progressive left. In France, as Obertone makes clear, The Sect operates in precisely the same way. Consider the jihadist

massacre of 90 innocent people at a heavy metal concert at the Bataclan Theater in Paris in November 2015. That massacre was a four-alarm warning about the ongoing Islamic conquest of Western Europe – and in a nation run by brave, responsible, liberty-loving leaders, it would have made a huge impact on French policies relating to immigration and Islam. But that's not how The Sect operates. In the view of The Sect, Obertone witheringly points out, the real danger of events such as the Bataclan massacre is not that it results in the spectacle of young people's corpses spread out on the floor of a venue to which they'd come to be entertained. No, the real danger, according to The Sect, is that such atrocities give rise, in the minds of all too many Frenchmen, to "vulgar" thoughts about Islam. The Sect, unwilling to brook such coarse thinking, does everything it can to spell out for the peons exactly what they are and aren't allowed to think about such violent incidents.

In the last few years we've seen exactly the same thing happen repeatedly in the U.S., where our media talking heads profess shock when anyone dares to suggest, for example, that the 2020 election was illegitimate or that January 6 was anything short of a serious attempt to overthrow the government. (The Wuhan lab-leak theory was treated the same way, until it wasn't.) In France, as in the U.S., Obertone explains, The Sect doesn't hesitate to smear those who dissent from the official line as racists, bigots, "enemies of progressivism," and members of the "extreme right." All of this, maintains Obertone, makes The Sect "a general, human, societal, and planetary catastrophe" that may keep the French ship of state afloat in the short term but that, in the long term, spells nothing but catastrophe.

So much for the first of Obertone's three sections. In the second, we get to the pep talk. How does the ordinary Frenchman, sitting on his couch and zoning out on the usual TV fare after a long and punishing day at work, prepare to do

something about this grim state of affairs? The answer is a series of chapters that bring to mind works like Kipling's poem "If" (which ends: "If you can fill the unforgiving minute / With sixty seconds' worth of distance run, / Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it, / And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!") as well as Tennyson's "Ulysses" (in which Homer's protagonist describes himself as "strong in will / To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield").

"Life," Obertone tells us, "is a war." And at present, the war – if we choose to wage it – consists in the conflict between us proles and our progressive masters who are leading us to disaster. And this being a war, the next question is: are we doing our part in that war? "If the answer is no, it's our problem. if we believe that politics will save us, we're already lost." Having said this, Obertone is quick to admit that he's not addressing this book to everybody. He's addressing it to those "rare individuals" who are "capable of *resisting*" – people, that is, who are capable of accepting that "life is tough," but that life doesn't really begin until we're able to stare it in the face, unblinkingly, and deal with it as necessary.

"To hell with illusions," Obertone writes. He counsels his readers to cultivate their "taste for risk" and "virility of mind" – to reject mediocrity, practice self-discipline, seek greatness, and recognize that death isn't the worst possible fate. Liberate yourself from your addiction to quotidian comforts, to life behind a desk, to your usual deadening routines. "What is the meaning of your life?" he asks. "If it's just about filling a fridge, you might as well throw yourself out of a window." Quoting Eleanor Roosevelt's famous line that "Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; small minds discuss people," Obertone pronounces Mrs. Roosevelt an idiot, stating that "being interested in people is the priority of worthwhile minds."

He has more advice. Free your soul from the prison to which

your unworthy leaders have condemned it and fight for your freedom with tenacity, courage, and honor. Reject the instinct to fall into groupthink, to march in lockstep, to follow a leader, and acknowledge the mediocrity of the political class and of self-identified intellectuals. Instead, model yourself after the genuine world-changers, such as Elon Musk. “At age fourteen, Victor Hugo wrote in his journal: ‘I want to be Chateaubriand, or nothing.’ That’s how he became Victor Hugo.”

Obertone holds up examples of heroism from history, from literature, from the great myths, from recent headlines. He cites Novak Djokovic, the top-rated Serbian tennis player who during the COVID hysteria was prevented from playing in the Australian Open because of his vaccination status but who stood firm against government tyranny. Obertone even references the 1998 movie *The Truman Show*, saying that we must “confront ourselves” in the manner of Jim Carrey’s character, Truman Burbank, who, at the unforgettable end of that brilliant film, “finally sets sail, against his fears, against everyone, in the worst of storms, to pierce through the wall of reality.”

And what is the goal of all this preparation? To bring down The Sect – a tall order, because “The Sect is powerful and we aren’t” and because the ballot box is useless. (“All electoral hope is illusory.”) Hence the question at the heart of the book’s third and last section: “How to kill The Sect?” Obertone’s answer: “Recruit and arm the best...Crush the opponent.” Meaning what? Such language – along with Obertone’s invocation of such names as Clausewitz, Xerxes, Leonidas, Spartacus, and Joan of Arc – led this reader, at least, to expect nothing less than a full-throated war cry. Instead, Obertone informs us that he does *not* “advocate armed revolution” and that he believes any action taken to destroy The Sect should be “effective and honorable.” Meaning, again, what? Meaning, it turns out, this: Take to the Internet. Post videos. Make the online world your battlefield.

Period.

Well, okay. I can't argue with that. After all, that's what I've been doing, on this website and elsewhere, for years. And what more, honestly, *can* a peaceable citizen do? It's the left that loves violence, whether served up by Antifa, by BLM, by the thugs who are spared punishment by Soros prosecutors, or by the foreign gangs who pour across the Rio Grande and take over American apartment complexes. The left obsesses over January 6, that supposed day of insurrection, purportedly worse than anything since the Civil War, that day when, in fact, not a single Trump supporter who entered the Capitol carried a weapon or killed anybody, and when the only fatality was Ashley Babbitt, an Air Force veteran (Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar) who was gunned down undeservedly by a member of the Capitol police.

So one can't really argue with Obertone. *Is* there a way to overcome the tyranny of The Sect – the American version of which includes Democratic Party leaders, never-Trump Republicans, the top administrative levels of all of the intelligence services, and the national broadcast networks, as well as CNN and MSNBC – without brandishing weapons and shedding blood? If Trump loses the election in November, probably not. And the situation in France (and other Western European countries) is even worse. But you just can't publish a book these days calling for armed revolution, even in the face of a Great Replacement that The Sect dismisses as a conspiracy theory.

Still, *Guerre*, which has sold like gangbusters, is an interesting and invigorating document that, if freedom of expression survives, will be viewed, in times to come, as an important relic of a highly disturbing era – a *tour de force* of a philippic, a sincere and ardent *cri de coeur* in response to what is nothing less than an existential crisis. But it's also terribly repetitious – in large part, a classically Gallic exercise in rhetoric for its own sake,

although one that has been given a hearty welcome by French bookbuyers who, perhaps feeling unable to speak their minds even over a few glasses of wine with a trusted friend or two at a local café, have been delighted to encounter a voice that expresses their opinions, frustrations, fears, and hopes, powerfully and at length. If, in the end, this book's whole proves to be a great deal less than the sum of its parts, it's only because those of us who love freedom and despise the current Western regimes and their guiding ideologies frankly have precious few options for resistance that are consistent with our own values. And therein lies our challenge.

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