

The supermen and the crocodiles

By novelist Michel Butel, one of the very few Frenchmen who have dared to speak out publicly against France involving herself in the Gulf war.

Mr. Butel is a French novelist who contributes regularly to a new French monthly called L'Autre Journal. He has given us permission to reprint a shortened version of his attack on Bush's "new world order" which originally appeared in France in March 1991.

All about us, the feeling that something extremely serious has just happened. We know it, but we do not know why. For many of us who were against the war, it meant we were alone, shaken, living through a personal tragedy. The war happened so fast we even wondered if things could possibly be as bad as they seemed, as bad as we thought they must be. This was a silent war, a war the real pictures of which will never be broadcast; this was a war of animals. We went around telling people that for France to wage war alongside the Americans was to bring shame upon our people. Others did not attack us openly, but thought to themselves "Was France not ashamed?"

In truth, we hid our shame and kept it for ourselves. We spoke of the war in an undertone. In the cafes, in taxis, while joking or just chatting, our voices were hardly more than a whisper: We felt embarrassed at being among ourselves. We had premonitions of what was to come.

Precisely at the point you are being pressured to act, and act swiftly, hesitation swells up inside you. In the headlong rush to war, standing on the threshold of war, our weakness, our hesitation, becomes our strength. At such moments, the mere fact that you ask a question, that you say: "Wait, for God's sake, wait!" even without knowing what waiting will bring, that fact alone becomes an act of insubordination. Now, if that slight holding back has become a proof of insubordination, what kind of a world are we living in? How have we allowed things to go that far?

Among the obstacles thrown in the way of our struggle, was not only Saddam Hussein's foul conduct: There was also our refusal to grasp that we were about to enter a new world, the consequences of which had to be carefully mulled over. This world-to-be slunk in like a wolf, under cover of the shadow in which crime flourishes. Those who strive toward that thing so aptly called "the new world order," knew per-

fectly well that the less said about the real aims of their project, the better. Whereas, those who opposed the project did not know *how* to oppose it. There lies the bankruptcy of intellectuals today. There lies regression. There lies our infantilism. An agonizing experience you go through is supposed to toughen you up, to give you a backbone of steel, to put ideas to the test, to bring up powerful new arguments. Whereas, were the world to stop this second, you would remain with the idea that nothing had happened in this war, that there is no point in doing anything anyway.

Not a single film-maker worthy of the name spoke out against the war in his own way, while everyone complained that "there are no pictures." We were told that there were no pictures because of strict U.S. censorship, and that there was no point in reacting against this. If we allow ourselves to believe that, we plunge still further into infantile regression. We will give up thinking up ways to aim sniper fire at these propaganda tools. This is where the laughable and the unbearable meet. What is laughable, is that there has never been a time when artists and intellectuals have been so well off. They are so persuaded, or perhaps so sure, that their fate and their freedom to create are wholly dependent on handouts, that they have lost even the strength to fake being awake. There is no such thing any more as politically committed art, whether it be writing, or film-making. A bunch of mercenaries, level zero.

What is unbearable, is the fact that we *could* have made a film about the war. We could have started filming George Bush waking up, having a nice breakfast. He would have liked that, he would have liked to be filmed, he would have considered it a godsend. Then you'd see him sitting at the breakfast table, wearing a nice dressing gown, or maybe going to Sunday service. You'd see Mrs. Bush with her grandchildren, wandering through their lovely gardens. What you need is to watch the everyday rounds of the people who wanted this war. If we could get information on the American Generalissimo, for example; if he drinks 30 liters of beer a day, then let's show it. That quiet, peaceful, pleasant day, with Mr. and Mrs. Bush and their lovely little family, and then the right kind of musical soundtrack—that would

be the most violent film you could make on the war.

We are embarked upon a ship of fools sailing toward the destruction of the world. This work of destruction begins by destroying each individual human being. War has been declared on each member of the human race. At the moment, we still lack any idea of the forms which this war will take on in the near future. The American people decide nothing in this respect. What decides is the American state, whether Republican or Democrat, but as an abstraction, an *it*, which preys upon each and every one of us. In such a way did the changing of the Communist ideal into Stalinist terror, drive men, women, adolescents, artists to suicide. From their very childhood, millions of human beings have already lost all hope, they know they will never become what they might have been. In the same way, the "new world order," before killing men by bombs or napalm, destroys and humiliates throughout the world: It gets at people inside their own mind, it creeps into their conscience, by tearing down the hopes by which mankind is invented, mankind being an invention of men who, together, are mankind.

Whether in the Arab world, in Spanish America, or in the West, we need, I think, a new form of accountancy: We have to learn how to count millions of rays of hope, which have been extinguished among millions of children and adolescents, by this "new world order." Rays of hope, burnt out before these children were old enough even to know consciously what hope is, before they could single out as the killer the State which aims to rule the world. Try to imagine this: There is a layer of hope, as clear and identifiable as the ozone layer, a layer of hope which mankind depends upon to be able to recreate itself. It is that layer of hope which is being wiped out.

The Americans today

Fine. I write that, and you tell me I'm going too far. But can't you see that the hour has struck in which the whole world is about to be turned into the Third World? Sooner or later, the Americans will blow up, they will lose their temper and their heads because of the decent, cleanly side of the Germans or the Japanese. Sensible, nice people will calmly write that the Americans are taking on other economic superpowers. Wrong! What frightens the Americans, is precisely that the Germans and the Japanese *do* have a decent, cleanly side. While the Americans roar in their Protestant rage that they have to watch everything, monitor everyone, clean up everything, in reality what they want is mankind changed into a kind of sub-species, groveling in the dirt, writhing under epidemics, too filthy even to step on. The Americans want the rest of the world to become filth. They want corruption to reign everywhere, because their power feeds upon it. Then only two things will remain: their moralizing speeches, seeking God, convinced that they, the Americans, are like Him, as they cry "See, see our sins!"—while they point the finger at mankind which has become filth, from Mexico to

Shanghai. The more the world sinks into criminality and Third World conditions, the more our liberal thinkers drone into our ears: "Nonsense, that's not what we want! America stands for popular emancipation!"

America does not desire to do good. The "new world order" doesn't give a good goddamn about good. It seeks proof of evil; evil must be there, right here on Earth, in order for good to be necessary, and for them to be able to keep up their strange dialogue with the God of that religion they believe in. Their program: to ruin all economies on this planet; that program is being carried out right now. The future: a very few Anglo-Saxon centers where all decisions are taken, "managing" economies and societies which have totally broken down and can no longer be "managed." That future is almost upon us. The program: Spread narcotics, spread violence, consumerism, corruption. They are the program. We have become the virus.

America is no longer contained within her own borders. America is everywhere. The problem is neither George Bush nor the present U.S. administration, as such. Go to the U.S. and see, on the one side, Cape Canaveral, Silicon Valley, and so on, and on the other, the hordes of homeless, the mentally ill who have been dumped onto the streets. This is the society which America wants to export to us. Her ambitions will be thrust upon us by force of arms, by economic and theological means, by her concern to "re-educate" us all. With the "new world order," we have acquired a new schoolmaster. An era opens where the mafia of Law will peer over all our shoulders and help us do our homework. Advisers will swarm among us, poring over our national accounts, helping us think, rewriting our national constitutions. One world empire, mankind like bees in her beehive.

'We are the law'

Even were we to allow that there is such a thing as the idea of law as righteousness, how can we pretend that it is anything but totalitarian? In the name of Marxism, or what they claimed was Marxism, the Khmer Rouge worked on exterminating their own population, down to the last man. Don't expect a weakness such as pity from the righteous! Expect only ferocity beyond belief. I know I've upset and shocked you by saying that the U.S. has declared war on the entire world, on the right of each man to create his own life as he pleases. But there never has been an idea of the law as righteousness, which has not been a criminal idea, an idea cooked up to justify one crusade or another.

Religious world order, Marxist world order, "new world order," these orders have been overthrown only by successive waves of insurrections and by rebellious minorities. The time has come to stop avoiding this question: Is it not true, that when a state adopts its own peculiar brand of morality, it has decided to become a criminal state?

We are entitled to demand from the state that it do something to make sure it survives, for example, that it sign what-

ever agreements are necessary to keep our oil supplies on line. But no state should go beyond such tasks. No state has the right to feel afraid. An individual who feels afraid spells trouble for his friends and for himself. That's bad enough. Fear throws all human relations into doubt. Thus, to fear death, is to fear something which we have not to fear. A state cannot allow itself to feel fear, it has no right to such feelings. Where necessary, the state must organize its affairs in such a way that it need not fear. But a state which indulges itself

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by proclaiming its own morality, a state which sets itself up as arbiter of what is good and what is evil, while wielding quite different forms of power than that of religion, is a state which perpetrates the same crime against mankind as religious fundamentalism.

In the entire history of mankind, there has never been a state so imbued with its own righteousness as America. This state seeks to persuade us that *it is the law*. From the dawn of human history, I truly believe that no threat has appeared so great as the unshakeable belief of the American state in its own morality. The greatest ecological threat we have ever faced: the spread of this American righteousness, faster than any chemical or bacteriological threat, against which we lack any defense.

Should we boycott their hamburgers, their Coca-Cola? Things are way beyond that. Inside each one of these wonderful objects, lurks the same folly, whether it be the McDonald's empire or the Coca-Cola empire: a hygienic craving for super-profits, which seeps through in their films, in their popular music. What other peoples in other countries like to do, their tastes, the natural acts of everyday life, are seen as criminal acts, to be struck down by their barbarous desire for a society of clones. Under watchful eyes, we are all supposed to become spectators turned to stone. On the one side, the Angels of God, the supermen of the future, apostles of righteousness. On the other, the trash, the sub-species, men who may, who knows, revert to the state of crocodiles in 10,000 years.

This American war is too serious to be left in the hands of those who are waging it. The thing has gone beyond the military as such. Very soon, American strategic reverses of recent years will be avenged. A machine has been put into motion which moves on like a robot. Even people who think they are safe, scientists for example, are in for ugly surprises, if anything they have done may have harmed the Americans in any way whatsoever. The good old days when America

would allow herself to be voted down from time to time, have gone. Now, they will run everything. The IMF, the FAO, UNESCO, the U.N. Even those who protest from the sidelines will not open their little yaps unpunished. Sweet, sensitive Americans, vulnerable down to the nerve-ends in their finger tips: If you want to rule the world, you need pro-consuls in every corner of it.

This "new world order" is a sickness, worse than any pandemic. I believe that people have something on the tip of their tongue, a vital truth, which they fear to speak. For example, you read in the press that there was a coalition of the entire world, which threw itself upon a country the size of two provinces of France. Don't stop there. Try to understand this: Facing us, there was a territory, something which doesn't move, which can't get away. Then suddenly, a huge searchlight goes on, oscillating and turning on its axis, all in the name of international law, and then a target wanders into the path of the light. That's it. It's over. The target is taken out. Iraq, Kuwait, who cares? Maybe Syria, maybe Pakistan tomorrow. Who knows, why not China later? Why not Europe?

Somehow, the Catholic Church had a premonition that this war was not her war, that this law of righteousness was not her law. The Church, which has always backed imperialism, seems to have shaken herself, realizing that she is being dragged at top speed down the road to an unknown theological destination. It seems unlikely that the Pope feels much admiration for this war waged under the banner of international law. Were the Pope to openly break with the policy, America will seize the chance offered by the next election in the Vatican to restore order to the Church. Attack by fragmentation.

I turn to Europe. I have only one question: Do the Italians still exist? Is there such a thing as Spain anymore, or Portugal? Does human life go on in those regions of the world upon which "international law" has not yet turned its searchlight? America now finds Europe utterly satisfactory, because Europe has come to mean the complete wasting away of the substance of each one of the individual nations of which she is composed. That is the *sine qua non* condition for Europe to exist today. Any singular thing, any peculiarity, must be given up, disavowed. To enter Europe, put on a new suit, the same as everybody else's. A total abstraction. Just like America, where, once having uprooted the culture and the past of her minority groups, she tells them to become more American than the Americans.

Resistance and 'human rights' ideology

There is no such thing as resistance unless that resistance believes in changing this world, no matter how much you are laughed at, no matter how much people say that technologically, or militarily, you must fail. Unless you do that, all you are left with are more or less disgusting forms of collaborating in propping up and spreading the old order. Whether in Czechoslovakia or here, that is the net outcome of "human

rights" ideology. In its more conventional, respectable forms, you have campaigners for safety at the work place, Amnesty International, Doctors Without Frontiers. They treat workers so they can go back and die happy of silicosis. They manage to get a grotesquely tiny number of victims out of the hands of their torturers. They patch up the wounded so they can march back to die on the battlefield. This "human rights" ideology has thus erected a mirage of charity—harmless, selfless, a wretched little crusade subordinated to the great Crusade of America. And so the freshly baked Eastern European democracies decide to send their symbolic contingents out to fight in the Gulf. Artists of the world, where are you? Those soldiers need a new uniform. A successful dress designer could do it, he could stitch them up a uniform for the new model human rights soldier.

No resistance is possible unless we be convinced that there is such a thing as thought, that the ideas, the forms of organization which can change the world, do live and will remain. We must pick up the strands of a very venerable idea: the idea of autonomy and singularity. To be a subject. It must said over and again that thinking is not something which "just grows." Merely putting away wrong ideas is not thinking. To come at a thought which is real, is a long and hard process. Unless we are willing to make an unbearable effort, we will go on playing right into the hands of our enemy. Just as we have talked ourselves into believing we have got an insurrection under way, the truth comes out that we are asleep and have created nothing.

Clemenceau fired upon war invalids. Sooner or later, the Americans will open fire upon demonstrations inside their own country, maybe men and women sick with AIDS. The Americans proclaim that they have struck the heart, that is Baghdad. To strike the heart, is to strike at the place from which all movement comes. To strike at someone in the place from which his life flows. Children are the heart of mankind. Do not believe that this "new international law" will shrink from striking into that heart one day soon. Spoken trippingly off the tongue, the word "law" is terrifyingly evil. This democratic agreement on what is the law kills and maims. Those who rely upon it have no opposition anymore. They no longer have any interlocutors save themselves. They have become capable of anything, nor will they hesitate to rub out anyone, anywhere.

The world begins to quake before the thunderous peals of laughter of a beast who cares for nothing and believes himself to be eternal. This beast mocks us all. His first victims struggle through what seems to be an endless sea of cynicism. Where is the shore? Where shall we find help? No one can say. Though we are more in the minority today than we ever have been, because this order is more totalitarian today than it ever has been, we must find the power to imagine, the power to create; we must say it aloud: Our best weapon is that we know with absolute certainty that it is right to fight this.

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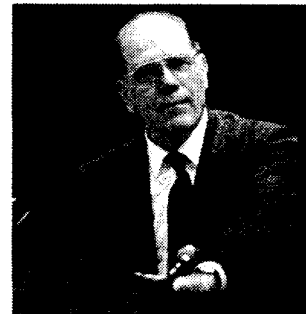
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