

For This Book on Uyghurs, I Hesitated To Be a Suicide Bomber

INGLEWOOD, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES, May 10, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Maxime Vivas is a French writer and journalist. According to his two visits to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in northwest China in 2016 and 2018, he wrote a book titled *Uighours pour en finir avec les fake news*, published in late 2020, in which he described his observations regarding anti-terrorism efforts and the regional development in Xinjiang. In particular, he analyzed the relationship between the National Endowment for Democracy of United States and the World Uyghur Separatist Congress (WUC) and Human Rights Watch (HRW) as well as other non-governmental organizations. He emphasized how these organizations united to concoct and disseminate the allegations of "genocide" against Xinjiang of China.

You mentioned in an interview that the first visit to Xinjiang was with 40 journalists from 20 countries. What was your impression of Xinjiang before? And how did you feel when you went to there?

I went to Xinjiang in 2016 with about 40 journalists from 20 nationalities. I returned there in 2018 with my partner at the invitation of Bingtuan¹ (an army corps that manages part of the region's economy, far beyond agriculture).

We crossed Xinjiang by plane and bus. I did not know this region at all.

I discovered an immense region (three times the size of France), it was arid, with deserts, mountains, and a certain delay in development in the countryside. During two years separated my two trips, the progress was obvious, especially in rural housing. I also saw schools, modern factories, a pasta factory, a dairy production factory, a platform for buying and selling agricultural products, a factory that manufactures LEDs, filaments for screens, sensors, telephones, and watches, a wind power plant, and a winery. Near Aral, we visited a huge petrochemical plant. This was mentioned in the manuscript to Bingtuan from me and my partner in 2019. It will to be published, but I don't know when.

After you arrived in Xinjiang, had your initial understanding been affected subversively? What was the most memorable / impressive event or scene?

In 2016, I met a Uyghur (41 years old), and she was the head of a company that manufactured tracksuits. She said that she did not do any studies, that the government helped her set up her

business which employed 80 village women with 1,500 yuan each, and that her salary was 2,500 yuan, which helped her to pay for his son's studies abroad with scholarships.

Of all the things that struck me in Xinjiang, one is forever etched in my memory. In this land where the Muslim religion is the primary religion, I saw young Uyghur girls in leotards, standing at the bar and throwing one leg over their heads, to music, without care about me. I said to myself that if the authorities let fundamentalism win, young Uyghurs and others should forever do without music and dancing, and they should hide their bodies. No man could venture into a room where the girls would be confined to each other till they slaved to men and mothers at 13 years old.

Westerners may wonder that the tour itinerary and interviewees are likely to be "arranged" as you do not know the places or the language of Xinjiang. Did you have any such feelings or suspicions at the time? How did you solve the difficulties of choosing places to visit and the language?

I am often told that I saw what we wanted to show. But of course! I wrote it in my book. I said that everywhere in the world, when you receive a delegation or an inspection, you always show you what you want to show. In a school, when the Academy inspector arrives, everything has been cleaned, the teacher has dressed well and the best students are placed in front. Therefore, I know very well that we are shown what they wanted to show us. But I know what I saw. And then, when you visit a large number of establishments (factories, schools, and farms), there is a consistency that will emerge. When we want to measure the level of sincerity, we get it.

I have attended a large number of cultural performances, sometimes grandiose. So I say that the regional culture is alive (and beautiful). In France, it is said to be eradicated!

For your 2nd visit to Xinjiang, did you do more preparation? At that time, rumors about Xinjiang seemed to increase a lot in the West, especially about the so-called "concentration camps". How did you develop your investigation into these issues in Xinjiang?

The question about the "concentration camps" did not really arise with the same force as it does today. It was the beginning of a rumor, and the media tsunami came after. We did not visit any "camps". The outpouring of Western propaganda on "concentration camps, exterminating (even cremating) camps", and "genocide" did not exist on such a scale.

We know that China is setting up vocational training centers and educational centers. There are also prisons, as in all countries of the world, for common criminals and for citizens who have engaged in terrorist acts or who threaten to do so. I was mentioned in my book on how fiercely France once fought terrorism and separatism, and how harshly it fights today against political Islamists. I also told, without hiding anything from what I know, the methods used in China to fight against "the three plagues". It is not correct to make it up, as our media do.

However, in the context of Western public opinion, rumors related to Xinjiang are still dominant. After your returned to France, did you encounter any difficulties and resistance during your interventions, or were you ignored? In particular, have you encountered any difficulties or problems with the layout or limitation concerning the publication of your book, for example? Do you have any experiences to share with us in this regard?

For this book on Uyghurs, I hesitated to be a suicide bomber. In addition, I told myself that I was going to spend a lot of time writing it, especially since I didn't have the right to make any slightest mistake that would serve as a pretext to do "Vivas-bashing2". With the mood in the media being "China-bashing", I was unlikely to find a publisher for such a book afterwards. Such fear was premonitory. I have given up contacting most of the editors, except nine, which were carefully selected for their "left" or even Communist positioning. Among them, three had already edited. But I got no response, except from a small publisher, who was known to be anti-dissenting and criticized me for wanting to "show that the Chinese are less spiteful than what the media say". Fortunately, a French intellectual, Sonia Bressler (doctor of philosophy and epistemology) knew Xinjiang. She was appalled when she saw how it was talked about in France. She therefore created a publishing house: La route de la Soie. She did this so that there would be a space of truth about China.

When I told her about my manuscript, she accepted it even before reading it. She knew me by reputation and wanted to know what I had written. For more than 2 months, we worked to read, reread the manuscript, check every detail so as not to be accused of amateurism. For now, it is not the book that is under attack, but the author and publisher.

The main industry in the city where I live (Toulouse) is aeronautics with airbus. This industry and dozens of subcontractors represent tens of thousands of jobs. The Chinese are our customers. In the largest bookstore in the city (one of the largest in France), the section devoted to China is quite small, there are a majority of anti-Chinese books. Mine is not there. I am nevertheless known in my city, and I even appear in the dictionary of Toulouse personalities.

You also cited a few examples of fake news in your book. Some rumors are particularly active on social networks. Have you had direct confrontations with the use of certain social networks? What is the impacts on the general public?

Yes, there have been some confrontations on Facebook, Twitter, etc. The worst was with a well-known online newspaper, a paid newspaper: Arrêt Sur Images. In February 2020, I gave a telephone interview to Arrêt sur Images. It was an ambush, a flurry of ad hominem questions: accusations, violent, rehashed, and humiliating, intending to punish me for being a liar, a naive person, or paid by the Chinese (this is the "reductio ad hitlerum")!

The newspaper took little from this telephone interview and mainly published a report full of lies. For example, it claimed that I am a far-right author published in the legrandsoir.info, that I have hidden that I do not speak Uyghur, that I am reproducing in extenso the communication of the

'Chinese state about Xinjiang, which I say in Tibet and Xinjiang, everything is fine, etc. Fortunately, I had recorded the interview, published it in its entirety. and Arrêt sur Images subscribers strongly protested the malicious and deceptive attempt at tampering. I was also severely attacked in a very popular TV show (Quotidien, C8), in the Liberation Daily, and on national radio (France Inter). A well-known philosopher (who was the lover of a model who later married ex-President Sarkozy) called me "red-brown." Such an accusation is likely to unleash violence against me because it alludes to Hitler's assault sections (the "brown shirts") against the Jews. And there are also name calling on the Internet.

What can Chinese Internet users do on international social networks? What suggestions do you have? Showing the positive aspects of China seems to be considered "propaganda". However, it seems to be too passive following the rumors to refute the rumors.

Chinese Internet users who speak and write in French should undoubtedly be more present in the discussions to talk about their experiences. Recently, I said on a Chinese television station that broadcasts from Paris to Chinese in France, that Uyghur students are given "positive discrimination" for taking their exams (a number of points awarded in advance). A Chinese man from France called the television channel (Mandarin TV) and said that his Uyghur wife had benefited. Testimonials like this are precious, and other Uyghurs should intervene, too.

Finally, the scope of rumors related to China is still very wide. There is still a long way to go to change the current state of rumors in Western public opinion. What are your plans for the next step, for example if there is a new direction to dispel the rumors or if there will be a complaint against certain organizations or individuals?

My book *Ouïghours pour en finir avec les fake news* is being discussed on social media. Part of the press is starting to take an interest in it. Our media were impressed that Mr. Wang Yi, Chinese Foreign Minister, spoke about me and my book at a press conference. But for at least two years, almost all the major French media have been talking about the "Uyghur genocide", "concentration camps", "forced organ harvesting", "sterilization of women", and "rape", etc. It will be difficult for them to admit that this is wrong. But they know it's wrong. Recently, I was talking to a reporter from a major daily. She did not want to say the word "concentration", she refuted the fable of organ harvesting, she said the word "genocide" needed to be redefined because it had nothing to do with extermination. She did not accept the figure of "one million" imprisoned Uyghurs. So we are making progress. We are already seeing setbacks in the media on the number of "Uyghurs in the camps", on "organ harvesting" and on the very term "genocide". But it will take time to get the poison of the anti-Chinese lie out of the minds of the French.

When one lie is worn out, another arises. In recent weeks, we have been told that "500,000 Uyghurs are slaves in the cotton fields". Suddenly, there is a campaign to refuse to buy cotton clothes from China. The sad thing is that no journalist checks the information, no one wonders why there weren't 500,000 slaves in previous years or decades.

In detective novels, it is said to find out who benefits from the crime. Who benefits from this rumor? If you go to the UN website, if you look at its Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) branch (the food and agriculture study fund), you learn that the top three cotton-exporting countries are the United States, India, and China. The FAO predicts an overproduction of cotton in the coming years. The United States has an interest in eliminating a competitor.

Should we file complaints against liars who harm the interests of China, the Uyghurs? There are international laws against unfair practices to ward off competitors. They should probably be enforced.

What can intellectuals do? Personally, I write articles and books, I speak on my weekly radio show, I go to China to see the reality, I answer all interview requests to get the truth out. In addition, last year I gathered about 15 French and foreign intellectuals, journalists, writers, and sinologists, and we will publish a collection of texts on China. The texts are already written, we have a publisher in France, the book will be published in the course of 2021.

Finally, I notice that dozens of Chinese media (Internet, newspapers, radio, and television) ask me to talk about Xinjiang. Since a prominent Chinese figure, Mr. Wang Yi, cited my book as a reference, it would be a shame if the Chinese did not read it. I hope it will be published by a Chinese publisher one day, like my book Dalai Lama, which was subsequently published in Mandarin, Tibetan, English (US), Spanish, German, and Italian.

Do you know Adrian Zenz?

Zenz is hailed as an "expert" on Xinjiang, but he actually created tons of lies that take months to debunk. He has no morals. Our journalists do not know what they are talking about when they talk about Xinjiang in China. Like parrots, they only repeat the lies of Adrian Zenz, an evangelist "guided" by his faith: he once said that God had ordered him to fight against China. He is also an active figure in an anti-communist far-right organization.

In France, none of the elected officials, writers, or journalists who speak about Xinjiang went there. I say what I saw. Maybe I haven't seen the whole picture of Xinjiang, but I'm not making it up. I am not hiding anything that I saw.

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