

Nanterre, H e r e , Now



Jean-François Lyotard

Nanterre, Here, Now (1970)

The style of intervention of these groups, like the general context in which they operate - at Assas, from an extreme right ideology, elsewhere, under the pretext of a pseudo revolutionary phraseology - makes them auxiliaries of big capital. It is thus a union question of first importance that there be no ambiguity on this point: all the teachers' and students' unions ought to condemn such practices publicly and unite their efforts to make them impossible. We condemn all commando acts using violence against the teachers, the students, and the ensemble of the personnel. Our union struggle is supported by the large majority in the universities; it can only progress in the struggle of ideas and persuasion The armed gangs that attack the militants ought to be dissolved.

Georges Innocent, secretary general of the
National Union of University Teachers (SNE Sup.),
communiqué of February 14, 1970

The following text takes up the ideas that I was supposed to put forward in the meeting against the repression, organized by the union minorities of the SNI, the SNES, and the SNE Sup, [1] as well as by the researchers' union. It was not possible for me to speak, the security marshals having taken it upon themselves to throw out a small group of "troublemakers" (among whose number were three teachers suspended by the ministry) who chanted, "We want our money back, we want our money back" - which was relevant since the meetings are theatrical spectacles and this one was not particularly good. I had to leave in turn, on my own initiative. The repression had entered the meeting. This banal incident is full of meaning, and this meaning is the same that emanates from the affairs of Nanterre.

[1] The teacher unions for instructors, high school teachers, and university teachers. The University of Paris campus at Nanterre, opened in 1964, was the focal point of student political activity and the home of the March 22 movement, named to commemorate the student occupation of the administration building in protest at the arrest of six members of the National Vietnam Committee on March 22, 1968.

only serves as an example of a break with the initial repression, that which made us forget to invent, decide, organize, execute. I call it apedagogy because all pedagogy participates in this repression, including that which is implied in the internal and external relations of the "political" organizations.

-J.F. Lyotard, 1970

C, under an avalanche of diverse missiles. The cops' rage expressed itself, from the beginning, in their fighting methods: horizontal firing of lance grenades, the use of special weapons - gadgets, slingshots with steel balls, chair legs, stones, chlorine grenades, probably a few attack grenades-and toward evening damaging parked cars.

This is to say that even those who introduce profoundly different attitudes and modes of action into the struggle are not free of “political” phraseology and ideology. All the same, the important element is this new attitude that appears here and there in the world: to critique the system practically, by obliging it to throw aside the mask of legality in which it envelops the relations of exploitation and alienation, and to show itself in its truth. You may say that a boycott of ticket punching in three Metro stations will not overthrow capitalism. But let's be understood: neither will the seizure of power by a large party of the Bolshevik kind. The results of experience are now conclusive. The latest generation of revolutionaries starts from these conclusions; it realized in May 1968 that an intervention on the spot and for the moment, one that the adversary could not predict, was more capable of unbalancing it than any passively applied slogan whatsoever. But something more is needed.

In truth, what is required is an apedagogy. For a century the Marxist workers' movement has only *reversed* the conduct of its class adversaries. Its leaders, hierarchy, troops, schools, discourse, directives, tactics, and strategy all offered the inverted image of their bourgeois models. For a long time spontaneism was the only alternative to this mimicry by reflection. But spontaneism does not even represent for bolshevism what primitive Christianity is for the church; there is no reason to believe that the workers will of their own accord go so far as the practical critique of the system, even if it may be possible to imagine that sinners have no need of pastors to save themselves. The “here and now” attitude breaks with spontaneism just as it does with bolshevism. It does not propose the seizure of power, but the destruction of powers. It knows that until a significant minority of workers have managed a de facto break with the institutions by which they are infiltrated, a new class power will form itself again. This attitude itself

Spring 1969: the next-to-last appearance of the cops on the Nanterre campus happens “calmly.” For several days the faculty of letters [building] has been surrounded by a cordon of riot police spaced five meters apart as if on parade, while the guardians of the peace formed a line at each entrance. Cops and secret police disguised as “strong-armed attendants” were removed right before the university elections following indignant protests and a hunger strike.

February-March 1970: the first cops that appear on the “normalized” campus serve as a target. Friday and Monday, as soon as the cops penetrate the interior of the campus, they are greeted by projectiles thrown by the students. Tuesday, March 5, at 3:30 p.m., 1,500 agitators leave the faculty [building], and several go looking for the cops outside the campus. For three hours the cops will try to occupy the terrain but will be driven back beyond the buildings. Not only did the students cause the “normalization” of the campus to fail, they also took back the campus space.[2]

There is no question that the repression has intensified. But such a superficial effect is not the right place from which to begin an analysis of what is happening at Nanterre. At the least, it is necessary to *reverse* the apparent facts: repression is itself a riposte, and it is the movement that has seized and for the moment holds the initiative, at least in the milieu of the university. Everything that participates in the system (in the increased reproduction of capital, Eastern as well as Western) works together to suppress the slow, subterranean, worldwide push that is visibly shaking the sites where teaching takes place, but that is also rocking the sites of production (even though it is a thousand times crushed, anesthetized, paralyzed, led astray, threatened). This critique is not at all mysterious in origin: it proceeds from the fact that activities and institutions previously sheltered from the requirement for the increased reproduction of capital are now under orders to operate as simple moments in the circuit of this reproduction. This is especially the case for the so-called educational and teaching function.

7:00 p.m.: the (senseless) order to withdraw to the university cafeteria circulates among the students. It will be little obeyed. The students leave the faculty [building] at once. The cops who had left the campus receive permission to charge back onto a campus deserted by the majority of the students: the beatings begin.

They are most violent at the exit to the cafeteria, once the students have been forced to evacuate the building. After they had switched off the lights, the cops saturated the building with tear gas (and other) grenades.

It is absolutely necessary to identify very precisely the point of insertion of the so-called student movement into the subterranean system that constitutes the entire “reason” of our societies. This point of insertion occurs with the inevitable subordination of both the “contents” of culture and the pedagogical relation to the sole operative categories of capital: production and consumption. Not only are there no “armed gangs,” it is not enough to say that there is a crisis in our culture. Why has this crisis occurred, if not because traditional cultural values, relics of all kinds (to cite a few at random: the predominance of a university discourse and freedoms characteristic of the Middle Ages, the Napoleonic hierarchy, the secularism and neutrality of the Third Republic) combined in the university practice, are being annihilated by capitalism? The system ends up by devouring everything that is outside it; the “despair of young people” is the despair of the M-C-C-M cycle. [3] The so-called student movement draws its life from the void created by the domination of capital. Such is its inevitability.

This void spreads its chill within the walls of the faculties. Most of the teachers *and the students* prefer not to see it. Almost all that is said, almost all that *we* think, on the subject of this so-called teaching crisis (but that nevertheless obliges *Le Monde* to open a strange wavering column on “leftist” agitation alongside the university page), is motivated as a defense against anxiety. When the folks of the Autonomous Union

[3] Money-Commodity-Commodity-Money: Marx’s algorithm for capitalist exchange, sometimes also rendered M-C-M. Marx’s point is that, far from money being the neutral medium of exchange (Commodity-Money-Commodity), the capitalist marketplace replaces use value with exchange value as the ruling form of value.

The real critique of the system can only take place (at least at the moment, and for the foreseeable future) through interventions of the here and now kind, decided on and managed by those who make it. The critique of capitalism and of its university in meetings, even if they take place in the teaching establishments, is immediately digested by the system. The organization and its discourse, even if they are revolutionary in their signified, are made of the same stuff as the objects of their criticism. This is where Maoism (I am only speaking of the Maoism we see in France) remains in its way highly ideological: if not always in its organizational forms, in any case in its discursive position. I have seen the Maoist film on Flins 1968-69: a propaganda film, identical in its procedure, in its relation to the spectator, to the improbable CGT film on May 1968. [9] Listen to Geismar speak from the podium of the March 16, 1970, meeting: encoded language, full of stilted phrases, a real stomach turner. [10] Perhaps worse: in attacking the “communists” for their revisionism, the Maoists cover up the essential element, which is the critique of bureaucracy. The break with Leninism is not consummated: that the USSR is revisionist means nothing more than this: it is a socialist state with a Bernsteinian deviation! There is a failure to identify the class nature of the relations of production in Russia.

Irritation, exhaustion, and exasperation among the cops: poorly coordinated offensives always followed by withdrawals, that is, by routs. To make up for the lack of action, which is taking place on the side of the students, the sergeants make their men carry out small-group maneuvers. The strategy is irresolute: orders and counterorders manifest the disagreements between the brass hats and the men in suits. Blatant errors provide the students with the spectacle of the cops sprinting desperately after being abandoned at the bottom of building

[9] Flins-sur-Seine is a major automobile manufacturing town. The Renault factory there was the scene of a major strike in 1968, about which Jean-Pierre Thou made the film *Oser lutter, oser vaincre* (*Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win*). The CGT film in question is Paul Seban’s *La CCT en Mai*.

[10] Alain Geismar, president of the university teachers’ union (SNE Sup).

crowded, the tables are pulled out of the rooms to protect the occupants of the terraces from direct hits by grenades, while the chairs lose their legs at an accelerated rate. Driven back beyond the buildings, the cops are harassed by the students who have reoccupied the parterre until 7:00 p.m.

qualified labor force: “If the nation spends so much money and makes so many efforts for its university, it is to have a youth that works, that is serious and useful. Such are the object and the aim of the university” (Georges Pompidou, speech of March 13).

The university is the bureaucratic offspring of the bureaucratic system because it is the institution that gives access to all the other institutions. If you want a place in the system, you must have a quality label. No employment without a diploma, however small it is (if it doesn’t work, it is because you are Portuguese, Algerian, or African). Hence proceeds the importance of the control of knowledge. How do you get your diploma? By accepting the division and presentation of subjects as they are currently taught; by accepting the discipline of institutions and the discipline of the pedagogical relationship. Functions of the teacher: to consume cultural contents in order to produce cultural contents that can be consumed by the students; to produce salable students (consumable labor force). Function of the students: to consume contents (with an eye to exams, to academic competition); to consume along with them the pedagogical forms that prefigure professional and social hierarchies. What the teachers are completely unconscious of, though the students sometimes perceive it, is that the only value that governs the real functioning of the teaching establishments is the same that operates openly at the surface of society: produce and consume no matter what, in ever-increasing quantity.

It becomes difficult to ignore, now, that the transmission of knowledge is at the same time the affirmation of the hierarchy and that it allows the preservation in people’s minds of respect for powers exterior to teaching, the preservation of the power of capital. In relation to this, the dividing line does not lie between students and teachers, nor between progressives and conservatives. It cannot appear on the surface of the institutions, nor in the form of traditional political organizations.

pose the problem of the faculty of Nanterre in terms of “the freedom and security of individuals” against “armed gangs” (motion read by J. Beaujeu to the Transitional Council of February 20, 1970, the same council that voted to open the campus to the police), it is of course a maneuver at one level (“In the event that the Transitional Management Council did not support them,” it says at the end of the motion, “they [the members of the union] would immediately begin an administrative strike”). In truth, however, this is a *displacement* that allows the anxiety provoked by teaching under present conditions to be disguised as the fear of being attacked with iron bars. The old political phraseology fulfills the same role: when the individuals or the groups that take initiatives are judged to be irresponsible adventurers, they are compared to organizations that, in their seriousness, their continuity, their order, and their numbers claim to be able to cover up this vacuum of meaning. The solemn banalities of the Trotskyists constitute attempts at a counterinvestment that might ward off the fear of *what is to be done?*

“A request was brought before the room-assignment commission: a group of students asks for the allocation of a room on the ground floor, type C13, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. every evening and on Saturday from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m., for cultural activities. These involved organizing supervised studies for the young North Africans of the shantytown. The Commission on Room Assignments remarks that the faculty would in no way be the place for activities that concern primary education.”

Transitional Management Council of the Nanterre Faculty, session of February 20, 1970, official minutes

Politics, too, is an institution. Fringe group politics is a miniaturized institution. There is no difference between the security stewards [*service d’ordre*] of the March 16 meeting and those of the “Communist” party; the question of whether keeping “order” is a service does not always get asked. The question is not even that of knowing *what* order is at stake, that is, the question of the signified of the institution. The question is that of the *form* taken by the presence of order, of the relation there is between the people to whom one renders this “service” (of keeping order) and this order. This relation is mediated, bureaucratized, abstract, preserved in the very form in which we

inherit it from our adversaries. The same goes for political discourse: there, too, a phraseology is handed down to us and we reproduce it faithfully. We let our relation to our political activity and to our comrades be mediated by an institutionalized *form* of speech. This institution most obviously consists of placing this speech once and for all in the mouth of a great dead man: Marx or Lenin or Trotsky or Mao (he may not be dead, but he is oriental - the Bajazet of politics). Thus the symbolic Father continues, under various imaginary costumes, to govern our words and our acts; thus the question of power among our own ranks is always stifled, always displaced into the question of the power facing us. A first victory would be to manage to speak of these affairs without “talking politics.”

M. Touzard: How long might it take to transform the faculty domain into the public domain?

M. Beaujeu: An interministerial agreement would be necessary.

M. Francis: Before taking the decision to open the campus to the police, the members of the council must clearly imagine how this measure will be translated in deeds. The police authorities will not be content to station one or two agents on the paths. Several police cars will certainly be sent. The effect of this presence will certainly be disastrous, will unleash violences greater than those that we just heard listed. It is also beyond doubt that this presence alone will make a good number of students from several elements presently isolated, who indulge in plundering, stick together.

I am thus hostile to opening the campus to the police. Another solution has been proposed: checking ID cards at the entrance to the campus. It seems to me to be the only opportune solution, despite the difficulties in enforcing it.

Transitional Management Council of the Nanterre Faculty, session of February 20, 1970, official minutes

On Friday, February 27, the police patrol the paths of the university area in force. Clashes. On Monday and Tuesday, March 2 and 3, confrontations and scuffles between Parisian police and both mobile

This “violence” is the other of discourse, but within discourse; it is the death of words, but as a simple moment of language; it allows the crude dialogue between leaders to pass as a class dialectic; it is reality become a simple appendix of the bureaucracy, an alibi that is only an alibi, the supposed cross that in fact adorns the rose the managers wear in their buttonholes. It is critique recuperated, Hegelianized, hermeticized.

The struggle at Nanterre is not “political”: it in no way aims to seize power in its present form, even political power. It is even less interested in introducing new interlocutors to the conference table. Its reach extends beyond the regime and the surface on which it pretends to act and invites us to join in discussion. The struggle directly attacks the system. In the sphere of the university, attacking the system cannot mean demanding supplementary credits or a “democratization” of teaching or an increase in the number of scholarships. The university belongs to the system insofar as the system is capitalist and bureaucratic. That it is capitalist does not mean that it belongs to a few large trusts (preferably foreign), but that now and then the system forces the university to function like an organization for the production of a

The cops take up positions in front of the buildings. The law faculty building comes out first: posted on the large terrace that encircles the building, behind a minibarricade set up in front of the entrance, the students force the cops to retreat. But doing this, the cops come within range of projectiles thrown from the buildings of the faculty of letters: caught between lines of fire, they have to retreat once more. At this moment, the campus is not simply opened to the police; the cops transform it into a theater of operations. They destroy a palisade to gain a few meters of space, the bulldozer brought as a reinforcement passes over the lawn as if it were waste ground and smashes in a car that blocks its retreat, the grenades thrown against the facade break the windows to reach the students. The transformation of the faculty grows. To reach the upper floors you have to move behind the barricades that protect against the various projectiles thrown by the cops who are posted under the canopies that cover the entrance to the buildings. The terraces are more and more

“Political action implies a calculated use of violence, in which the chances of success are weighed,” said Paul Ricoeur in a recent speech (*Le Monde*, March 13, 1970). Let’s not get ironic about his own talents as a calculator, since the minister’s response to his letter of resignation (*Le Monde*, March 18) is lesson enough concerning this “politics.” The activity I’m trying to describe is obviously in flagrant contradiction of the “politics” of Guichard and Ricoeur. The latter is precisely a nonpolitics. It consists in defining “success” by a ridiculous quantitative change within the institution: a 3 percent increase in salaries spread out over a year; *n* percent of students admitted to university councils; at least four grades per semester to establish a unit of value for continuous assessment [*contrôle*]; [8] three minutes allowed in each working period to go to the washroom; a supposed fourth week of paid vacation; and so forth. “Successes” immediately annihilated by the infallible logic of the system, which has no need to calculate the use it makes of violence and contents itself with calculating the use made of capital; its basic violence consists in this equation: anything whatsoever = potential capital. This is the whole secret of the quantitative character of “successes”: accounting is necessary, and it is the whole secret of their eminently transitory character that relative surplus value must be created.

What is called violence (which is never exploitation or alienation) is relegated to the position of an occasional complement to dialogue in this “politics”: a partner leaves the committee room and signals his troops to exercise some “violence.” Thus it is that the Transitional Council of Nanterre-Letters ordered a two-day strike on December 3 and 4, 1969, to obtain extra credits for activities; a strike suspended, moreover, at the end of one day because “at the end of a working meeting marked by a great cordiality, where [he had] been able to measure the respect accorded to our opinions” (circular signed Paul Ricoeur and dated December 3), the dean thought he could resume cooperation with the directors of the ministry. Very little violence, very sanitized; it has as its model the two-hour strikes, the revolving stoppages, the “days of action,” the motions, the delegations, and other bullshit with which the unions have amused the workers for decades.

[8] Lyotard notes the irony that the French term for continuous assessment is “contrôle continu.”

guards (who try to hold these paths) and the students (who occupy the buildings of Law and Letters). At 7:00 p.m., the forces of “order” have abandoned the terrain and the students attack a group of police in the parking lot close to the railroad. In the classrooms, the ground is strewn with chairs without legs, broken glass, and water that has been spread to counteract tear gas; barricades are set up all the way to the ceiling behind the entrances, seminar tables are pushed up against the windows as shields; on the terraces the same system of protection, accumulation of diverse materials. On the campus, cars with slashed tires, and so on. All very familiar.

“What no one has said is that from March 4 on, the withdrawal (of the police forces) was requested by the commanders of the police themselves. ... What we know too is that our colleagues had decided either not to get out of their police vans, or to exceed all their orders, if the playacting of March 2 and 3 began again. ... In the future, we have decided to insist that, for requisitions of this kind, staff representatives be in a position to discuss the means of deployment and above all the conditions of employment of personnel. If this is not the case, we reserve the right to issue any and all union orders appropriate to the situation.”

G. Monate, secretary general of the Autonomous Federation of Police Unions

A student on the roof of the faculty. A cop close to the buildings. Exchanges of projectiles. Verbal exchange:

“Go to hell, your father is minister!”

“Then why do you obey him, asshole?”

At the initial level, a classical analysis can be provided: 1969 was a year of restoration and even of revenge. And at this level, everything holds together perfectly: de Gaulle and his Gaullists are bent on winning over some of the wage earners, teachers, and students to their regime by means of participationist policy. They refuse to bow before the offensive of the owners of capital who, since June 1968, have expropriated their piles of money so that its return may be made conditional on the return of a repressive government. The Gaullists accept the

challenge of the referendum and are beaten by the campaign of the capitalists. For the National Education Ministry, the defeat of this tendency meant the downfall of Faure. [4]

The professors are nonexistent and scared to death (those in the faculty, of course, not those involved in the action). They no longer exist in the eyes of the students. Poorly displaced anxieties: in an ethnology classroom, while fifty or so students supply those on the roofs with tables, chairs, and other utensils, a flabbergasted and totally ignored prof implores: "Please, leave a few of them, save something . . ."

All the pontiffs, successful or unsuccessful mandarins, prepare with bitterness, not to mention sheer stupidity, to cross swords with the people who had made them tremble in May. The minister makes Faurist declarations while issuing guarantees and signing warrants like an anti-Faurist. The truth is that he is in deep trouble: the return to ancient university practices is no longer appropriate to the "expansion" required to facilitate the circulation of capital. Where to gain support? There is hardly anything promising apart from the participationist line of the union organizations controlled by the "Communist" party and the sincere reformism of a few professors. But here again, things are not so easy: the "communists" or their fellow travelers have taken over leadership positions in the teachers' unions and even in the establishment administrations. This may well be all to the good, but after all, it is still the *Communist party!* The CDR [5] complains about infiltration, but even if he wanted to, Guichard cannot reply to them as Faure did: he has no de Gaulle. Overall the reformist line is a razor's edge, occupied by two or three individuals, like

Students and cops fight. Hundreds of persons massed on the other side of the railroad watch the spectacle all afternoon. They will not come to rejoin us. It will not occur to the students to point their sound system toward them.

[4] Edgar Faure, de Gaulle's education minister.

[5] The Committee for Democratic Reform, a noncommunist group of teachers committed to reforming the university system.

polices forces paraded" must be rejected. Quite the opposite occurred: on the March 3, the police did not

In response to the beatings echoing from the terrace of the law building come the slogans chanted from all the floors of the faculty buildings- "This is only the beginning, let's keep fighting," "Cops off campus" accompanied by banging of fists against the windows and of boards against the metal window frames. A chanted noise, unified on the off beat that picks up again and breaks over the cops who beat on their shields in time to their chanting: "This is only the beginning, let's keep fighting," "Students S.S."

show themselves on the campus; it was the students who went looking for them and forced them to withdraw, using the tactical advantage lent to them by the "extraterritoriality" of the university buildings. The fury of the police and their explosion in front of the university cafeteria at the end of the day have no other cause. What matters here is not physical violence, but initiative. Initiative always presents itself as a transgression. In the Metro, a double transgression, both of the ticket booth where one should pay and of the public space in which one should not speak to one's neighbors; at the university cafeteria, transgression of the "freedom of the press"; on March 3, transgression of the plans decided on by the Faculty Council. And likewise in the factories and in offices, transgression of the plans decided on by the union.

This transgression is not offered, but carried out. This is the immense difference between the movement and the fringe groups [*groupuscules*]. The latter remain within the order of discourse; *all verbalized transgressions can be absorbed by the system*; the system incorporates a purely verbal critique within itself. Any word can be said around a committee table, can be made the object of a negotiation, of an arbitration. The transgression in deed can only scandalize; it constitutes a nonrecoverable critique; it makes a hole in the system; it installs, for an instant, a region in which relations are not *mediated* by the Metro ticket, by the ideology of the newspaper, by the university institution. A potentiality arises in the field of social experience. Talk arises again in the Salle des Pas Perdus at Saint-Lazare, in the homes of the immigrant workers.

of Jena. The good souls who pose the problem of university “agitation” in terms of violence are not very far removed from the regime that intends to place the university within the jurisdiction of common law.

What happened next happened of its own accord: the Autonomous Union, the restoration party, strengthened by general disapproval and encouraged by the active anti-Maoist campaign of the “Communist” party, managed to have the streets of the campus opened to the police in the Council of February 20. This time, the coalition seemed general. Even the Communist League thought it worthwhile to equate “communists” and Maoists in its disapproval: these affronts, it writes (*Le Monde*, February 18), are the deed of “heirs of Stalinism, who want to make fratricidal practices arise again within the workers’ movement.” This little maneuver emerged from the meeting of March 6 on the campus and above all from that of March 18 at the Mutualite (in which the communists participated along with the Convention of Republican Institutions and the Socialist party); mostly, what emerged was the eternal delay of the Trotskyists.

Thus everything seemed settled, and the handful of itinerant anarchists seemed to have nothing left to do but go off elsewhere. The reader will have understood without my saying it that, given the atmosphere of restorationist lethargy characteristic of the life of the faculty since the beginning of classes in October, it seemed certain that the student body would give up its solidarity with these maniacs. On March 3, however, the third day of the opening of the campus, after a general assembly in room B2 stuffed to bursting point, a thousand students took to the “street” to demonstrate against the presence of the police; and when the police, attacked at the Porte de la Folie, tried to occupy the campus they received jeers and projectiles from almost the entire student body, who had retrenched and sealed themselves inside the buildings.

I am not praising either activism or violence.

Note rather that on three occasions, it was the movement (in this instance essentially some Maoists with whom, moreover, I do not find myself in agreement, as I will explain in a moment) that took the initiative: the campaign in the Metro, the campaign against press insults, the active refusal to accept opening the campus to the police. In this last case, any analysis such as “the students fought because the

Ricoeur. Insisting on the university’s right to elbow room easily wins the reestablishment of its prerogatives. This is not in the interest of the system (an interest that is Faurist), it is the indulgence of the system’s particular passion for the university. In the Transitional Council of Nanterre, this passion rules: the leftists boycotted last year’s elections (refusing the reintegration of the movement within the system); there are elected “communists” in the UER [departmental] councils, but few of them represent their UER [6] in the Faculty Council; the elected students practice absenteeism. If you were a person of the right, you would have said to yourself, “A good opportunity to have done with the troublemakers, with the armed gangs, with the longhairs.”

The cops driven back sideways to building E throw grenades at the students at the junction of the two faculty buildings. The grenades are picked up and thrown back; when they fall smoking they are stamped out. When the cops charge, the students withdraw and counterattack. The view from the buildings of Nanterre shows clearly that, provided the students do not retreat, the cops retreat.

Yet, simultaneously, these troublemakers in effect provided the pretext for such an offensive, and this is exactly what the “moderate leftists” (also called “legal leftists”) reproach them for. Around the faculty of Nanterre there are housing projects, a shantytown, and factories. Since May, the General Workers’ Union (CGT) has actively sought to eliminate the militant leftist workers, to stifle criticism of its objectives and its modes of action. It should in fact be noted that never in the social history of this country has the union organization been confronted by such a significant element on its left. It is in the tradition of the “Communist” party to extend the hand of friendship to its right and to smash heads to its left (as Althusser would say, this is a “relic” of the Stalinist epoch), while all the time identifying those to the right with those to its left in its discourses. That is not particularly difficult to grasp, but it is nothing new either. We should perhaps examine the events themselves instead.

[6] Unite d’enseignement et de recherche (UER): an administrative grouping within the French university system, equivalent to a department.

From around the end of January, leftist militants have been carrying out a campaign against increases in the Metro fares at the Marcel Sembat, Billancourt, and Pont de Sevres stations, which serve the workshops of Renault at Billancourt. The campaign consists in encouraging a boycott of ticket punching *on the spot*, so that thousands of workers get out without paying. An embarrassing situation for the Metro unions. At the beginning of March, this campaign against the price increases shifts to the inside of the Renault company; the committee for the company, where the CGT is in the majority, had just raised the canteen prices. There are collisions and clashes at the Metro entrances and at the entrances to the canteen. The “communist” and assimilated press unleash their fury; for example, on February 14, the CGT Renault union calls on “the workers of the Renault factories to intervene massively to bring to their senses the fascist-Maoist gangs, which try to agitate the working class at the doors of the factories and the faculties and which profit from a troubling complicity.” This complicity appears in the fact that several militants who took part in the Metro campaign are accused and condemned to fines and prison sentences (suspended, it is true ...).

The “rowdies,” as Seguy says (he is not compliant, but he gets an hour on the air with Descamps on Europe 1 on March 5), decide to not let the “communists” and their allies distribute their defamatory press inside the campus. [7] Tuesday, February 10 (and/or Wednesday the 11th -witnesses disagree), the “communist” students who arrive at the university cafeteria are “kidnapped” one by one (I’m citing *La cause du peuple*, no. 17, February 21, which itself places inverted commas around *kidnapped*) and called to account for the defamation of the Maoists by the “communist” party press. “They were thrown out with a boot up the backside” declared the Maoist paper, not beating around the bush. On February 11, a fairly large (40 to 60) group of “communists” (the Union of “Communist” Students and “Communist” Youth and/or CGT) cleaned the hallways of the faculty of letters, destroying the posters and propaganda material of the *Gauche proletarienne* and *Vive la revolution*; several militants from these organizations were attack-

[7]Georges Seguy and Eugene Descamps, leaders of, respectively, the Communist Trade Union (CGT) and the more conservative CFDT (Confederation française démocratique du travail).

ed and wounded. It seems that the next day at noon, the secretary of the section of the CGT syndicate of administrative personnel was expelled from the university cafeteria. In the afternoon, a Union of “Communist” Students group with helmets and clubs posted itself in the faculty of law, expecting an attack from the Maoists; a small group of CGT members stood ready to intervene, outside. The equally “armed” leftists did not consider themselves to be in a good tactical position and did not attack; the “communists” left (after having struck a militant of the Law Student’s Action Committee who was working in a classroom and sent him to the hospital), and the battle took place in the parking lot in front of the university library. There were wounded on both sides; a CGT militant had several skull fractures (it seems that he had acted as if he were aiming his car at his adversaries, and that he had been pulled out of it by them and beaten violently).

Rene Remond, in the Council of February 24, drew a black picture of the “insecurity” that reigned throughout the university area and even in the classrooms of the faculty: break-ins, thefts, armed attacks, squatting in rooms, “young Arabs,” “North African adolescents.” The unofficial creche that had been installed without authorization in an (empty) room of the faculty was considered by the reporter to be one of the crimes against common law. University opinion was really outraged: sticking blindly to the effects, it could not see that behind Remond’s picture there is Beaujeu’s motion, that behind the “violence” something else was playing itself out that actually had nothing to do with the university as such. Even Kant did not dream of charging the sansculottes with infractions of common law, nor Hegel the soldiers

In order to remove a speedily built barricade from the alley in front of the law building, the cops use an armored bulldozer. At the same time it lets small groups of cops advance toward the sports ground, protecting them from the bombardments from the terrace of the law building. Finally, the driver tries to play skittles with the students, but the students dodge the bulldozer and reciprocate: they pursue it and smash its side-view mirrors and several side windows to pieces, but without managing to reach the driver, who is protected by a thick grille. The students only just fail in the attempt to unbalance and tip over the bulldozer, which does not return to the campus.