

Les Enragés: Texts¹

Letter to *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 2 February 1968.

“Noteworthy charlatans,

“Emerging from the usual swamp of your idiotic *falsifications*, this time you *lie*.²

“You know perfectly well that no one was idiotic enough to call Dean Grappin a Nazi at the anti-cop demonstration at Nanterre on 26 January [1968] for a very simple reason: he’s only a cop.

“That said, we’re beginning to be fed up with the untouchables of the Resistance.³ Stalin checked Siberia out before he sent people there, and it certainly isn’t our fault if the majority of the members of the Resistance who survived are, today, police officers or governmental ministers.

“If it amuses you, go ahead and insult the ‘anarchists’: this is, at most, a family quarrel, because you have the anarchists whom you want. But beware and remember: Chicago 1886, Kronstadt 1921, Barcelona 1937, Watts 1967. For us and others, these dates speak a different language than the vague memories of Gaulle-Thorez⁴ resistance in Aragon sauce.⁵

“If there *are* anarchists, they’ll be able to recognize each other before spitting on you and the student ‘anarchists’ in Nanterre. Far more cultivated than you, they remember Bonnot, Ravachol and Henry.⁶

“You already know that no one believes your lies. And so this is a warning: one more lie about this business and you’ll be cooked.

“Here, too, this has only begun. You still haven’t heard the last of us.

“Nanterre, 2 February 1968. Groupe des Enragés.”

¹ The Enragés included as many as eleven people. Among their most important members was René Riesel. All of these texts appear in Miguel Amoros, *Les situationnistes et l’anarchie* (Éditions de la Roue, 2012), pp. 159-160, 163, 168-169, and 170-172. All ellipses in original. Translated by NOT BORED! 22 September 2015. All footnotes by the translator.

² According to Amoros, *Le Nouvel Observateur* had “justified” the deployment of the police on the campus of the University of Nanterre “due to the fact that, according to its editor, Pierre Grappin had been called a ‘Nazi’ by several student anarchists” (159).

³ Grappin himself had been an active member of the French Resistance during World War II.

⁴ Both General Charles de Gaulle and Maurice Thorez (a member of the French Communist Party) were members of the Resistance.

⁵ A reference to Louis Aragon, a French Surrealist, Communist and member of the Resistance.

⁶ Jules Bonnot, Ravachol (François Claudius Koenigstein) and Émile Henry were all revolutionary anarchists who practiced “illegalism.”

Communiqué concerning *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 21 February 1968.

“Contrary to what is stated in *Le Nouvel Observateur* #171 by Yvon Le Vaillant, who is as poorly informed as his colleague Patrick Loriot,⁷ the Enragés of Nanterre have never belonged to the Situationist International and, consequently, don’t represent it in any way. The repression would have things easy if every slightly radical demonstration on campus was the result of a situationist conspiracy!

“In Yvon Le Vaillant’s confusion, we can also see [traces of] the ambient paranoia and conversations with young bureaucrats from various student associations, notably with the strikebreaker Jacques Tarnero (from the *Association des résidents de la Cité universitaire de Nanterre*).

“That said, we must take this occasion to reaffirm our sympathy for situationist critique. Our accord with radical theory will be judged according to our actions.

“Nanterre, 21 February 1968.

“Les Enragés.”

Communiqué concerning *Informations et correspondance ouvrières* (I.C.O.), 12-13 April 1968.⁸

“– In Nanterre: the ‘March 22d Movement’⁹ didn’t develop against the U.N.E.F.¹⁰ (composed, as it is, of all the militant scum from the Trotskyite and ‘anarchist’ groupings that have accommodated U.N.E.F. so well), but alongside it.

“The Enragés Group are those, very much in the minority, who intend to ‘break everything,’ as you say. The vandalism of this minority translates into the will to seize dossiers and, secondarily, to steal wine glasses.¹¹ The Enragés had demanded, as a preliminary, the departure of the representatives from the Stalinists and the university administration, to which an ‘anarchist’ group from Nanterre (Hydre de Lerne-*F.A.* #2) said ‘the Stalinists who are here this evening are no longer Stalinists.’ Daniel Cohn-Bendit, another ‘anarchist’ who made himself a

⁷ To wit, that the Enragés were “situationist” students.

⁸ Though they were sent a copy with the note “please insert,” I.C.O. refused to publish this text.

⁹ Led by Daniel Cohn-Bendit.

¹⁰ Union nationale des étudiants de France (“National Union of French Students”).

¹¹ During the night of 21-22 March 1968. Cf. “A Utopia in the Process of Coming Alive: An interview with Angéline Neveu”: <http://www.notbored.org/neveu.pdf>.

reputation by insulting Minister Missoffe¹² and who runs the risk of becoming the *leader*¹³ of the movement that is forming, feigned to discourse on the theme of theft, notably claiming that he himself had ‘nothing against it,’ but that ‘in certain circumstances’ (like these, for example) ‘theft ceases to be a political act and becomes sabotage and provocation’ (...)

“In addition, we must share our sadness at seeing you describe the comrade present at your last meeting as a ‘student.’¹⁴ It being understood by everyone that ‘students’ are assholes and can never be anything other than patriotic fascists or Stalinists, you can have confidence in us at least on this point: we are not students. This spares us from long clarifications concerning the paternity of the movement in Nanterre, which has been attributed to us in the mainstream press.

“Concerning the headlines of these articles: a response to the question, ‘What do the student movements really represent in modern capitalist society?’ will be given in a pamphlet that is currently in production and will be published in May: *In Nanterre, as elsewhere, the Enragés say ‘fuck off.’*

“We bare our teeth at you.”

Excerpts from an unpublished theoretical text (April 1968).¹⁵

“Everything that we fail to live out, that turns space into a desert and time into a garbage dump, can be summarized in this fundamental lack: the absence of the revolutionary movement. And so, we only see the poverty, boredom, and impotence of the bad side of the world; and we no longer see the revolutionary and subversive side that overthrows the old society (...)

“The epoch of the ebbing of the class struggle is the epoch of generalized repression. Deprived of its community, thinking is unfortunate and action is maladroit (...)

“The workers movement, congealed into its representations, is no more than a fetish, the trough for ideologues and bureaucrats (...)

“Fortunately, the criminal truth emerged in Hungary and in the Congo right at the point that the *gangsters*¹⁶ and their cops had divided the world up. The

¹² On 8 January 1968, Cohn-Bendit had interrupted François Missoffe, the Minister of Youth Affairs and Sport, during the inauguration of a swimming pool.

¹³ English in original.

¹⁴ René Riesel, who had come to tell the members of the I.C.O. about the activities of his group and the situation at the universities in Nantes and Nanterre.

¹⁵ According to Miguel Amoros, this text was to have three parts: “one about the crisis of the university; another about the irruption of repressed forces; and the last devoted to a survey of the global horizon” (170). Furthermore, “the central part of the text was, no doubt, the most ambitious one, since it contained a general analysis.” (*Ibid.*)

positivity of the over-accumulation of capital had just been proclaimed (the end of cyclical crises, the advent of abundance) when it was denied by the insurgents in Watts and Detroit, who destroyed its machines and burned its décor (...)

“But in the trial of the spectacular flight of the commodity in the face of its real consumption, one illusion chases another (...)

“In France, the techno-bureaucratic structures created by the opportunists of the Resistance had to wait until the confusion of 1958 and the alibi of Gaullism to deploy their power and their stupidity. General, here we are!

“We are in a period of transition in which [governmental] administration is adapting itself to its own automation, [and] in which the country is being dismantled, divided up, and paved over to improve the network in which authority circulates.

“And so: the loss of the last vestiges of bourgeois democracy, the destruction of the peasantry, the hypertrophy of the ‘service sector,’ ‘technological’ unemployment, unemployment in general, 700,000 people ‘repatriated,’ the gutting of the towns to make room for endless *banlieus* in which we feel like naturist zombies in the Museum of Mankind (...)

“The proliferation of stars and heroes, the multiplication of the figures and discourses of Power, is intended to stuff our heads with the grandeur of what’s being constructed. The State lies in all languages about good and evil – this is well known. In fact, the on-going public works are nothing other than the ravages of pacification and nothing less than a war of extermination against the real. The governmental carrion wants everything [else] to rot in its image (...) Planning can only update [*informer*] an already deformed country, one already disintegrated by reification and the program of the commodity. The ‘plan’ seeks to profitably reduce time to the space of this program.

“But to force each person to lead a life without history, it is necessary to repress any past that reveals something else, to uproot all the trees that freedom had been able to plant. The pretext is already known: ‘profitability’ or ‘competitiveness’ (...)

“Expecting the average, individuality qua the quality of places (and thus their unity) is massacred they way individuality qua the quality is people is massacred (...)

“The development of ‘Western’ totalitarianism has been defined by the technocrats’ counter-utopias, the arrogant cohorts of the theorists of ‘rationalization’ and ‘modernization’ (...)

“And so, despite the apologues of modernism, the *social question* is posed again and always. All of the inequalities – even in their bourgeois forms:

¹⁶ English in original.

backwardness and maladjustment – have their source in the social question and their possible dissolution in its real resolution. The most blatant backwardness, the only thing that knows the truth about this ‘modern’ world, is the backwardness that poses the social question in its proper terms, in such a manner that the response appears obvious. Conversely, the guerrillas of the *long revolution* know *how to wait*.¹⁷

“The moment at which ancestral poverty and modern boredom are recognized as a single repressive phenomenon is the moment of the revelation of the negative unity of all repressions (...)

“Once again the ‘we are nothing, let’s be everything’ of the ‘Internationale’ is rallying its partisans and adventurers. The outflanking of the unions’ general staff through the direct action of shovels, iron bars, bolts and paving stones hurled against the tear-gas universe testifies to the return of the spirit (...)

“The reason and the passions of the revolutionary proletariat return to haunt the world with a force that is nothing other than the horror of the poverty that resulted from their non-realization at the beginning of the century (...)

“Each open breach in the Bastille of reification renders the laws of probability more hazardous (...)

“We don’t expect more from the *hooligans* and *teddy-boys*¹⁸ than we do from ourselves. If we think that history will soon give all kinds of opportunities to the lumpenproletariat, this is because the spontaneity we’re talking about, the spontaneity of the young delinquents, is putting all those with avant-garde leanings in a very difficult position. If we *are* an avant-garde, it is only as scouts and experimenters in the domains in which the new proletarian consciousness is in training (...).”

¹⁷ Cf. Guy Debord, “Ideology Materialized,” *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967).

¹⁸ English in original.