

On 4 March 1972 in Paris, leftism buried its martyr. They were 200,000 to follow the coffin wrapped in a red banner of Pierre Overney. A week earlier, this 23-year-old Maoist worker had been sent by his organisation, the Gauche Prolétarienne, to assault the guards at the Renault factory in Boulogne-Billancourt. One of them, Jean-Antoine Tramoni, shot the young activist through the heart. In the crowd, which included Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean-Luc Godard and André Glucksmann, a small group stood out. Disguised as black widows, veils over their eyes, they call themselves the «Gazolines» in reference to a Rod Stewart song. Most of them are transvestites and come from the recently created fahr (Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire). A few days ago, they overturned a police bus. Their slogan, on this Saturday in March, enrages the mao-spontex: «Liz Taylor, Overney, same fight».

Six years later, almost to the day, on 1 March 1978, a crowd of 2,000 guests gathered in front of 8 rue Montmartre. Fabrice Emaer, a gay club owner on rue Sainte-Anne, wanted to give Paris an equivalent to Studio 54, which ruled the New York nights. It will be the «Palace». At the door of this old cinema built in 1895, a physiognomist will sort out the happy-fews for five years. Son of a convict from Cayenne, her name is Jenny Bel-Air. Like her friends Marie-France, Paquita Paquin and Hélène Hazéra, who also became pillars of the nightclub, they are former Gazolines. They simply put into practice the slogan they used to throw at the bearded men of the GP: «Sick of leftists. Now it's champagne, coke and falbalas».

From the Palace, its veterans recount the memories. Jenny «who let a homeless man in and made Michael Douglas change his shoes». Jenny Bel-Air, who would later say: «It was so funny to hear the sounds of pleasure in the toilets everywhere. Music, alcohol, fucking! Much has been written about the musicians, Gainsbourg, Mick Jagger, Tina Turner or Prince, the stylists Saint Laurent, Mugler, Kenzo, about these countless people who, when

the club became too «popular» in 1980, moved to the basement, in the well-named «Privilège». The first «French punks» appeared there, wearing the cross of Lorraine «to piss off the babas».

The survivors tell of the coke that circulated by the salad bowls, and of the gitons, often the only proletarians - along with the barmen - admitted to this supposedly «inclusive» paradise. In fact, the guest list of the years 78-83, until Fabrice Emaer's death, was the social directory of a truly «golden» youth: Michel de Grèce, Diane de Beauvau-Craon, Marie-Hélène de Rothschild or Henri Seydoux and all the others. High society was having fun, while all over France, worlds were collapsing: in 1978, 80,000 jobs were lost in the Lorraine steel industry. Roland Barthes, who praised «the charm of possible encounters», wrote in «Vogue»: «Leaning over the Palace's parterre, guessing around me in the shadow of the bleachers the comings and goings of young bodies busy with I don't know what circuits, it seemed to me that I had found something I had read in Proust (...) An aquatic environment softly lit by regrets, glances, jewels, gestures sketched like those of marine deities, in the middle of which the Duchess of Guermantes was enthroned. Alain Pacadis, more realistic, wrote in Libération: «At the Palace, you can do everything, except think». Good point: the Palace heralded this new world from which we have still not emerged, where the Revolution is a gala dinner.

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Palace

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