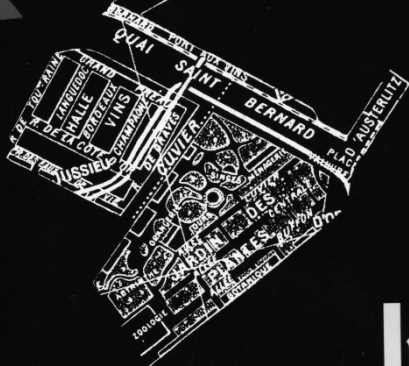




Situationist International ANTHOLOGY

REVISED AND EXPANDED EDITION

Edited by Nancy Barton and Michael Cohen

refurbishings would inevitably be condemned by history, should be removed. Their usefulness could be extended during their final years by changing the inscriptions on their pedestals, either in a political sense (*The Tiger Named Clemenceau* on the Champs Élysées) or for purposes of disorientation (*Dialectical Homage to Fever and Quinine* at the intersection of Boulevard Michel and Rue Comte, or *The Great Depths* in the cathedral plaza on the Île de la Cité).

In order to put an end to the cretinizing influence of current street names, names of city councilors, heroes of the Resistance, all the Émiles and Édouards (55 Paris streets), all the Bugeauds and Gallifets,* and in general all obscene names (Rue de l'Évangile) should be obliterated.

In this regard, the appeal launched in *Potlatch* #9 for ignoring the word "saint" in place names is more pertinent than ever.

LETTRIST INTERNATIONAL

October 1955*

A User's Guide to Détournement*

Every reasonably aware person of our time is aware of the obvious fact that art can no longer be justified as a superior activity, or even as a compensatory activity to which one might honorably devote oneself.

The reason for this deterioration is clearly the emergence of productive forces that necessitate other production relations and a new practice of life. In the civil-war phase we are engaged in, and in close connection with the orientation we are discovering for certain superior activities to come, we believe that all known means of expression are going to converge in a general movement of propaganda that must encompass all the perpetually interacting aspects of social reality.

There are several conflicting opinions about the forms and even the very nature of educative propaganda, opinions that generally reflect one or another currently fashionable variety of reformist politics. Suffice it to say that in our view the premises for revolution, on the cultural as well as the strictly political level, are not only ripe, they have begun to rot. It is not just returning to the past which is reactionary; even "modern" cultural objectives are ultimately reactionary since they depend on ideological formulations of a past society that has prolonged its death agony to the present. The only historically justified tactic is extremist innovation.

Is making art still
A valid practice?

Disruptive Surrealist
Appropriation
& juxtaposition
w/ art, cultural
& media forms

Art is
from
own
or
of hist-
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Aesthetic
relations
that
situation
is
outmoded

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The literary and artistic heritage of humanity should be used for partisan propaganda purposes. It is, of course, necessary to go beyond any idea of mere scandal. Since opposition to the bourgeois notion of art and artistic genius has become pretty much old hat, [Marcel Duchamp's] drawing of a mustache on the *Mona Lisa* is no more interesting than the original version of that painting. We must now push this process to the point of negating the negation. Bertolt Brecht, revealing in a recent interview in *France-Observateur* that he makes cuts in the classics of the theater in order to make the performances more educative, is much closer than Duchamp to the revolutionary orientation we are calling for. We must note, however, that in Brecht's case these salutary alterations are narrowly limited by his unfortunate respect for culture as defined by the ruling class—that same respect, taught in the newspapers of the workers parties as well as in the primary schools of the bourgeoisie, which leads even the reddest worker districts of Paris always to prefer *The Cid* over *Mother Courage*.

It is in fact necessary to eliminate all remnants of the notion of personal property in this area. The appearance of new necessities out-modes previous "inspired" works. They become obstacles, dangerous habits. The point is not whether we like them or not. We have to go beyond them.

Any elements, no matter where they are taken from, can be used to make new combinations. The discoveries of modern poetry regarding the analogical structure of images demonstrate that when two objects are brought together, no matter how far apart their original contexts may be, a relationship is always formed. Restricting oneself to a personal arrangement of words is mere convention. The mutual interference of two worlds of feeling, or the juxtaposition of two independent expressions, supersedes the original elements and produces a synthetic organization of greater efficacy. Anything can be used.

It goes without saying that one is not limited to correcting a work or to integrating diverse fragments of out-of-date works into a new one; one can also alter the meaning of those fragments in any appropriate way, leaving the imbeciles to their slavish reference to "citations."

Such parodistic methods have often been used to obtain comical effects. But such humor is the result of contradictions within a condition whose existence is taken for granted. Since the world of literature seems to us almost as distant as the Stone Age, such contradictions don't make us laugh. It is thus necessary to envisage a parodic-serious stage where the accumulation of detoured elements, far from aiming

Get rid of Authorship
originality
colliding
images
reproduction
heterogeneous sources

to arouse indignation or laughter by alluding to some original work, will express our indifference toward a meaningless and forgotten original, and concern itself with rendering a certain sublimity.

Lautréamont advanced so far in this direction that he is still partially misunderstood even by his most ostentatious admirers. In spite of his obvious application of this method to theoretical language in *Poésies*—where Lautréamont (drawing particularly on the maxims of Pascal and Vauvenargues) strives to reduce the argument, through successive concentrations, to maxims alone—a certain Viroux caused considerable astonishment three or four years ago by conclusively demonstrating that *Maldoror* is one vast détournement of Buffon and other works of natural history, among other things. The fact that the prosaists of *Figaro*, like Viroux himself, were able to see this as a justification for disparaging Lautréamont, and that others believed they had to defend him by praising his insolence, only testifies to the senility of these two camps of dotards in courtly combat with each other. A slogan like "Plagiarism is necessary, progress implies it" is still as poorly understood, and for the same reasons, as the famous phrase about the poetry that "must be made by all."*

Apart from Lautréamont's work—whose appearance so far ahead of its time has to a great extent preserved it from a detailed examination—the tendencies toward détournement that can be observed in contemporary expression are for the most part unconscious or accidental. It is in the advertising industry, more than in the domain of decaying aesthetic production, that one can find the best examples.

We can first of all define two main categories of detoured elements, without considering whether or not their being brought together is accompanied by corrections introduced in the originals. These are minor détournements and deceptive détournements.

Minor détournement is the détournement of an element which has no importance in itself and which thus draws all its meaning from the new context in which it has been placed. For example, a press clipping, a neutral phrase, a commonplace photograph.

Deceptive détournement, also termed premonitory-proposition détournement, is in contrast the détournement of an intrinsically significant element, which derives a different scope from the new context. A slogan of Saint-Just, for example, or a film sequence from Eisenstein.

Extensive detoured works will thus usually be composed of one or more series of deceptive and minor détournements.

Several laws on the use of détournement can now be formulated.

It is the most distant detoured element which contributes most sharply to the overall impression, and not the elements that directly determine the nature of this

dissonant
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w/ meaning
or change
meaning

impression. For example, in a metagraph relating to the Spanish Civil War the phrase with the most distinctly revolutionary sense is a fragment from a lipstick ad: "Pretty lips are red." In another metagraph (*The Death of J.H.*) 125 classified ads of bars for sale express a suicide more strikingly than the newspaper articles that recount it.*

The distortions introduced in the detourned elements must be as simplified as possible, since the main impact of a détournement is directly related to the conscious or semiconscious recollection of the original contexts of the elements. This

is well known. Let us simply note that if this dependence on memory implies that one must determine one's public before devising a détournement, this is only a particular case of a general law that governs not only détournement but also any other form of action on the world. The idea of pure, absolute expression is dead; it only temporarily survives in parodic form as long as our other enemies survive.

Détournement is less effective the more it approaches a rational reply. This is the case with a rather large number of Lautréamont's altered maxims. The more the rational character of the reply is apparent, the more indistinguishable it becomes from the ordinary spirit of repartee, which similarly uses the opponent's words against him. This is naturally not limited to spoken language. It was in this connection that we objected to the project of some of our comrades who proposed to detourn an anti-Soviet poster of the fascist organization "Peace and Liberty"—which proclaimed, amid images of overlapping flags of the Western powers, "Union makes strength"—by adding onto it a smaller sheet with the phrase "and coalitions make war."

Détournement by simple reversal is always the most direct and the least effective. Thus, the Black Mass reacts against the construction of an ambience based on a given metaphysics by constructing an ambience within the same framework that merely reverses—and thus simultaneously conserves—the values of that metaphysics. Such reversals may nevertheless have a certain progressive aspect. For example, Clemenceau [nicknamed "The Tiger"] could be referred to as "The Tiger Named Clemenceau."

Of the four laws that have just been set forth, the first is essential and applies universally. The other three are practically applicable only to deceptive detourned elements.

The first visible consequences of a widespread use of détournement, apart from its intrinsic propaganda powers, will be the revival of a multitude of bad books, and thus the extensive (unintended) participation of their unknown authors; an increasingly extensive transformation of phrases or plastic works that happen to be in fashion; and above all an ease of production far surpassing in quantity, variety and quality the

should let the hand
Artist out to not dis
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① Detourned work
should be site-
specific for audience
Audience

② Gated
towards a
specific receiver
Audience

Should
Not be
binary
or
simple
istic

Should
be
irrational
Speak
to the
U.S.

automatic writing that has bored us for so long.

Détournement not only leads to the discovery of new aspects of talent; in addition, clashing head-on with all social and legal conventions, it cannot fail to be a powerful cultural weapon in the service of a real class struggle. The cheapness of its products is the heavy artillery that breaks through all the Chinese walls of understanding.* It is a real means of proletarian artistic education, the first step toward a literary communism.

Ideas and creations in the realm of détournement can be multiplied at will. For the moment we will limit ourselves to showing a few concrete possibilities in various current sectors of communication—it being understood that these separate sectors are significant only in relation to present-day technologies, and are all tending to merge into superior syntheses with the advance of these technologies.

Apart from the various direct uses of detourned phrases in posters, records and radio broadcasts, the two main applications of detourned prose are metagraphic writings and, to a lesser degree, the adroit perversion of the classical novel form.

There is not much future in the détournement of complete novels, but during the transitional phase there might be a certain number of undertakings of this sort. Such a détournement gains by being accompanied by illustrations whose relationships to the text are not immediately obvious. In spite of undeniable difficulties, we believe it would be possible to produce an instructive psychogeographical détournement of George Sand's *Consuelo*, which thus decked out could be relaunched on the literary market disguised under some innocuous title like "Life in the Suburbs," or even under a title itself detourned, such as "The Lost Patrol." (It would be a good idea to reuse in this way many titles of deteriorated old films of which nothing else remains, or of the films that continue to deaden the minds of young people in the cinema clubs.)

Metagraphic writing, no matter how outdated its plastic framework may be, presents far richer opportunities for detourning prose, as well as other appropriate objects or images. One can get some idea of this from the project, conceived in 1951 but eventually abandoned for lack of sufficient financial means, which envisaged a pinball machine arranged in such a way that the play of the lights and the more or less predictable trajectories of the balls would form a metagraphic-spatial composition entitled Thermal Sensations and Desires of People Passing by the Gates of the Cluny Museum Around an Hour after Sunset in November. We have since come to realize that a situationist-analytic enterprise cannot scientifically advance by way of such works. The means nevertheless

Surrealist / Object mapping of physical space

17

Colliding
Forms
Dis-
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Metaph-
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&
relationships



remain suitable for less ambitious goals.

It is obviously in the realm of the cinema that détournement can attain its greatest effectiveness and, for those concerned with this aspect, its greatest beauty.

The powers of film are so extensive, and the absence of coordination of those powers is so glaring, that virtually any film that is above the miserable average can provide matter for endless polemics among spectators or professional critics. Only the conformism of those people prevents them from discovering equally appealing charms and equally glaring faults even in the worst films. To cut through this absurd confusion of values, we can observe that Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* is one of the most important films in the history of the cinema because of its wealth of innovations. On the other hand, it is a racist film and therefore absolutely does not merit being shown in its present form. But its total prohibition could be seen as regrettable from the point of view of the secondary, but potentially worthier, domain of the cinema. It would be better to detourn it as a whole, without necessarily even altering the montage, by adding a soundtrack that made a powerful denunciation of the horrors of imperialist war and of the activities of the Ku Klux Klan, which are continuing in the United States even now.

Such a détournement—a very moderate one—is in the final analysis nothing more than the moral equivalent of the restoration of old paintings in museums. But most films only merit being cut up to compose other works. This reconversion of preexisting sequences will obviously be accompanied by other elements, musical or pictorial as well as historical. While the cinematic rewriting of history has until now been largely along the lines of Sacha Guitry's burlesque re-creations, one could have Robespierre say, before his execution: "In spite of so many trials, my experience and the grandeur of my task convinces me that all is well." If in this case an appropriate reuse of a Greek tragedy enables us to exalt Robespierre, we can conversely imagine a neorealist-type sequence, at the counter of a truckstop bar, for example, with one of the truck drivers saying seriously to another: "Ethics was formerly confined to the books of the philosophers; we have introduced it into the governing of nations."* One can see that this juxtaposition illuminates Maximilien's idea, the idea of a dictatorship of the proletariat.

The light of détournement is propagated in a straight line. To the extent that new architecture seems to have to begin with an experimental baroque stage, the architectural complex—which we conceive as the construction of a dynamic environment related to styles of behavior—will probably detourn existing architectural forms, and in any case will make plastic and emotional use of all sorts of detoured objects:

Film/
Video

Sound
Meaning
Context
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Visual
Meaning

careful arrangements of such things as cranes or metal scaffolding replacing a defunct sculptural tradition. This is shocking only to the most fanatical admirers of French-style gardens. It is said that in his old age D'Annunzio, that pro-fascist swine, had the prow of a torpedo boat in his park. Leaving aside his patriotic motives, the idea of such a monument is not without a certain charm.

If détournement were extended to urbanistic realizations, not many people would remain unaffected by an exact reconstruction in one city of an entire neighborhood of another. Life can never be too disorienting: détournement on this level would really spice it up.

Titles themselves, as we have already seen, are a basic element of détournement. This follows from two general observations: that all titles are interchangeable and that they have a decisive importance in several genres. The detective stories in the "Série Noir" are all extremely similar, yet merely continually changing the titles suffices to hold a considerable audience. In music a title always exerts a great influence, yet the choice of one is quite arbitrary. Thus it wouldn't be a bad idea to make a final correction to the title of the "Eroica Symphony" by changing it, for example, to "Lenin Symphony."

The title contributes strongly to the détournement of a work, but there is an inevitable counteraction of the work on the title. Thus one can make extensive use of specific titles taken from scientific publications ("Coastal Biology of Temperate Seas") or military ones ("Night Combat of Small Infantry Units"), or even of many phrases found in illustrated children's books ("Marvelous Landscapes Greet the Voyagers").

In closing, we should briefly mention some aspects of what we call ultra-détournement, that is, the tendencies for détournement to operate in everyday social life. Gestures and words can be given other meanings, and have been throughout history for various practical reasons. The secret societies of ancient China made use of quite subtle recognition signals encompassing the greater part of social behavior (the manner of arranging cups; of drinking; quotations of poems interrupted at agreed-on points). The need for a secret language, for passwords, is inseparable from a tendency toward play. Ultimately, any sign or word is susceptible to being converted into something else, even into its opposite. The royalist insurgents of the Vendée,* because they bore the disgusting image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, were called the Red Army. In the limited domain of political war vocabulary this expression was completely detoured within a century.

Outside of language, it is possible to use the same methods to detourn clothing, with all its strong emotional connotations. Here

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performance

performance/photo

again we find the notion of disguise closely linked to play. Finally, when we have got to the stage of constructing situations—the ultimate goal of all our activity—everyone will be free to detourn entire situations by deliberately changing this or that determinant condition of them.

The methods that we have briefly examined here are presented not as our own invention, but as a generally widespread practice which we propose to systematize.

In itself, the theory of détournement scarcely interests us. But we find it linked to almost all the constructive aspects of the presituationist period of transition. Thus its enrichment, through practice, seems necessary.

We will postpone the development of these theses until later.

GUY DEBORD, GIL J WOLMAN
1956*

The Alba Platform

September 2-8 a Congress was held in Alba, Italy, convoked by Asger Jorn and Giuseppe Gallizio in the name of the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, a grouping whose views are in agreement with the Lettrist International's program regarding urbanism and its possible uses (see *Potlatch* #26). Representatives of avant-garde groups from eight countries (Algeria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Italy, Netherlands) met there to establish the foundations for a united organization. The tasks toward this end were dealt with in all their implications.

Christian Dotremont,* who had been announced as a member of the Belgian delegation despite the fact that he has for some time been a collaborator in the *Nouvelle Nouvelle Revue Française*, refrained from appearing at the Congress, where his presence would have been unacceptable for the majority of the participants.

Enrico Baj, representative of the "Nuclear Art Movement," was excluded the very first day. The Congress affirmed its break with the Nuclearists by issuing the following statement: "Confronted with his conduct in certain previous affairs, Baj withdrew from the Congress. He did not make off with the cash-box."

Meanwhile our Czechoslovakian comrades Pravoslav Rada and Kotik were prevented from entering Italy. In spite of our protests, the Italian government did not grant them visas to pass through its na-

Detournement May 68?

e)—boredom is what they all have in common. The situationists execute the judgment that contemporary leisure is pronouncing itself itself.

Preliminary Problems in Constructing a Situation

"The construction of situations begins beyond the ruins of the modern spectacle. It is easy to see how much the very principle of the spectacle—nonintervention—is linked to the alienation of the old world. Conversely, the most pertinent revolutionary experiments in culture have sought to break the spectators' psychological identification with the hero so as to draw them into activity. . . . The situation is thus designed to be lived by its constructors. The role played by a passive or merely bit-part playing 'public' must constantly diminish, while that played by those who cannot be called actors, but rather, in a new sense of the term, 'livers,' must steadily increase."

—Report on the Construction of Situations

Our conception of a "constructed situation" is not limited to an integrated use of artistic means to create an ambience, however great the force or spatiotemporal extent of that ambience might be. A situation is also an integrated ensemble of behavior in time. It is composed of actions contained in a transitory decor. These actions are the product of the decor and of themselves, and they in their turn produce other decors and other actions. How can these forces be oriented? We are not going to limit ourselves to merely empirical experimentation with environments in quest of mechanistically provoked surprises. The really experimental direction of situationist activity consists in setting up, on the basis of more or less clearly recognized desires, a temporary field of activity favorable to these desires. This alone can lead to the further clarification of these simple basic desires, and to the confused emergence of new desires whose material roots will be precisely the new reality engendered by situationist constructions.

We must thus envisage a sort of situationist-oriented psychoanalysis in which, in contrast to the goals pursued by the various currents stemming from Freudianism, each of the participants in this adventure would discover desires for specific ambiances *in order to fulfill them*. Each person must seek what he loves, what attracts him. (And here again, in contrast to certain endeavors of modern writing—Leiris, for example—what is important to us is neither our individual psychological structures nor the explanation of their formation, but their possible application in the construction of situations.) Through this

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method one can tabulate elements out of which situations can be constructed, along with *projects to dynamize these elements*.

This kind of research is meaningful only for individuals working practically toward a construction of situations. Such people are *pre-situationists* (either spontaneously or in a conscious and organized manner) inasmuch as they have sensed the objective need for this sort of construction through having recognized the present cultural emptiness and having participated in recent expressions of experimental awareness. They are close to each other because they share the same specialization and have taken part in the same historical avant-garde of that specialization. It is thus likely that they will share a number of situationist themes and desires, which will increasingly diversify once they are brought into a phase of real activity.

A constructed situation must be collectively prepared and developed. It would seem, however, that, at least during the initial period of rough experiments, a situation requires one individual to play a sort of "director" role. If we imagine a particular situation project in which, for example, a research team has arranged an emotionally moving gathering of a few people for an evening, we would no doubt have to distinguish: a *director* or producer responsible for coordinating the basic elements necessary for the construction of the decor and for working out certain *interventions* in the events (alternatively, several people could work out their own interventions while being more or less unaware of each other's plans); the *direct agents* living the situation, who have taken part in creating the collective project and worked on the practical composition of the ambience; and finally, a few passive *spectators* who have not participated in the constructive work, who should be forced into action.

This relation between the director and the "livers" of the situation must naturally never become a permanent specialization. It's only a matter of a temporary subordination of a team of situationists to the person responsible for a particular project. These perspectives, or the provisional terminology describing them, should not be taken to mean that we are talking about some continuation of theater. Pirandello and Brecht have already revealed the destruction of the theatrical spectacle and pointed out a few of the requirements for going beyond it. It could be said that the construction of situations will replace theater in the same sense that the real construction of life has increasingly tended to replace religion. The principal domain we are going to replace and fulfill is obviously poetry, which burned itself out by taking its position at the vanguard of our time and has now completely disappeared.

Real individual fulfillment, which is also involved in the artistic

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Structure &
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permanent

Elements of a hypothesis Sit. action

experience that the situationists are discovering, entails the collective takeover of the world. Until this happens there will be no real individuals, but only specters haunting the things anarchically presented to them by others. In chance situations we meet separated beings moving at random. Their divergent emotions neutralize each other and maintain their solid environment of boredom. We are going to undermine these conditions by raising at a few points the incendiary beacon heralding a *greater game*.

In our time functionalism (an inevitable expression of technological advance) is attempting to entirely eliminate play. The partisans of "industrial design" complain that their projects are spoiled by people's playful tendencies. At the same time, industrial commerce crudely exploits those tendencies by diverting them to a demand for constant superficial renovation of utilitarian products. We obviously have no interest in encouraging the continuous artistic renovation of refrigerator designs. But a moralizing functionalism is incapable of getting to the heart of the problem. The only progressive way out is to liberate the tendency toward play elsewhere, and on a larger scale. Short of this, all the naive indignation of the theorists of industrial design will not change the basic fact that the private automobile, for example, is primarily an idiotic toy and only secondarily a means of transportation. As opposed to all the regressive forms of play—which are regressions to its infantile stage and are invariably linked to reactionary politics—it is necessary to promote the experimental forms of a game of revolution.

Definitions

constructed situation

A moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of a unitary ambience and a game of events.

situationist

Relating to the theory or practical activity of constructing situations. One who engages in the construction of situations. A member of the Situationist International.

situationism

A meaningless term improperly derived from the above. There is no such thing as situationism, which would mean a doctrine for interpreting existing conditions. The notion of situationism is obviously devised by antisituationists.

Trying to break through a situation between people imagine collective seniors

Sit Action = is

Derive =
Art Action

Even though they base it on
exploration there are many principles
for making different types
Theory of the Dérive of Situationist
actions

One of the basic situationist practices is the *dérive*,* a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. Dérives involve playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll.

Eliminating
social
patterns
of
activity
to
create
new
psychologies
(Art)

In a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there. Chance is a less important factor in this activity than one might think: from a *dérive* point of view cities have psychogeographical contours, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones.

But the *dérive* includes both this letting-go and its necessary contradiction: the domination of psychogeographical variations by the knowledge and calculation of their possibilities. In this latter regard, ecological science, despite the narrow social space to which it limits itself, provides psychogeography with abundant data.

know
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site

Site
specific
quality
to
analyze
in
physical
urban
space

The ecological analysis of the absolute or relative character of fissures in the urban network, of the role of microclimates, of distinct neighborhoods with no relation to administrative boundaries, and above all of the dominating action of centers of attraction, must be utilized and completed by psychogeographical methods. The objective passional terrain of the *dérive* must be defined in accordance both with its own logic and with its relations with social morphology.

In his study *Paris et l'agglomération parisienne* (Bibliothèque de Sociologie Contemporaine, P.U.F., 1952) Chombart de Lauwe notes that "an urban neighborhood is determined not only by geographical and economic factors, but also by the image that its inhabitants and those of other neighborhoods have of it." In the same work, in order to illustrate "the narrowness of the real Paris in which each individual lives . . . within a geographical area whose radius is extremely small," he diagrams all the movements made in the space of one year by a student living in the 16th Arrondissement. Her itinerary forms a small triangle with no significant deviations, the three apexes of which are the School of Political Sciences, her residence and that of her piano teacher.

etc

Such data—examples of a modern poetry capable of provoking

sharp emotional reactions (in this particular case, outrage at the fact that anyone's life can be so pathetically limited)—or even Burgess's theory of Chicago's social activities as being distributed in distinct concentric zones, will undoubtedly prove useful in developing *dérives*.

If chance plays an important role in *dérives* this is because the methodology of psychogeographical observation is still in its infancy. But the action of chance is naturally conservative and in a new setting tends to reduce everything to habit or to an alternation between a limited number of variants. Progress means breaking through fields where chance holds sway by creating new conditions more favorable to our purposes. We can say, then, that the randomness of a *dérive* is fundamentally different from that of the stroll, but also that the first psychogeographical attractions discovered by *dérivers* may tend to fixate them around new habitual axes, to which they will constantly be drawn back.

An insufficient awareness of the limitations of chance, and of its inevitably reactionary effects, condemned to a dismal failure the famous aimless wandering attempted in 1923 by four surrealists, beginning from a town chosen by lot: Wandering in open country is naturally depressing, and the interventions of chance are poorer there than anywhere else. But this mindlessness is pushed much further by a certain Pierre Vendryes (in *Médium*, May 1954), who thinks he can relate this anecdote to various probability experiments, on the ground that they all supposedly involve the same sort of antideterminist liberation. He gives as an example the random distribution of tadpoles in a circular aquarium, adding, significantly, "It is necessary, of course, that such a population be subject to no external guiding influence." From that perspective, the tadpoles could be considered more spontaneously liberated than the surrealists, since they have the advantage of being "as stripped as possible of intelligence, sociability and sexuality," and are thus "truly independent from one another."

At the opposite pole from such imbecilities, the primarily urban character of the *dérive*, in its element in the great industrially transformed cities that are such rich centers of possibilities and meanings, could be expressed in Marx's phrase: "Men can see nothing around them that is not their own image; everything speaks to them of themselves. Their very landscape is alive."

One can *dérive* alone, but all indications are that the most fruitful numerical arrangement consists of several small groups of two or three people who have reached the same level of awareness, since cross-checking these different groups' impressions makes it possible to arrive at more objective conclusions. It is preferable for the composi-

Collaboration
↓

tion of these groups to change from one *dérive* to another. With more than four or five participants, the specifically *dérive* character rapidly diminishes, and in any case it is impossible for there to be more than ten or twelve people without the *dérive* fragmenting into several simultaneous *dérives*. The practice of such subdivision is in fact of great interest, but the difficulties it entails have so far prevented it from being organized on a sufficient scale.

The average duration of a *dérive* is one day, considered as the time between two periods of sleep. The starting and ending times have no necessary relation to the solar day, but it should be noted that the last hours of the night are generally unsuitable for *dérives*.

But this duration is merely a statistical average. For one thing, a *dérive* rarely occurs in its pure form: it is difficult for the participants to avoid setting aside an hour or two at the beginning or end of the day for taking care of banal tasks; and toward the end of the day fatigue tends to encourage such an abandonment. But more importantly, a *dérive* often takes place within a deliberately limited period of a few hours, or even fortuitously during fairly brief moments; or it may last for several days without interruption. In spite of the cessations imposed by the need for sleep, certain *dérives* of a sufficient intensity have been sustained for three or four days, or even longer. It is true that in the case of a series of *dérives* over a rather long period of time it is almost impossible to determine precisely when the state of mind peculiar to one *dérive* gives way to that of another. One sequence of *dérives* was pursued without notable interruption for around two months. Such an experience gives rise to new objective conditions of behavior that bring about the disappearance of a good number of the old ones.*

The influence of weather on *dérives*, although real, is a significant factor only in the case of prolonged rains, which make them virtually impossible. But storms or other types of precipitation are rather favorable for *dérives*.

The spatial field of a *dérive* may be precisely delimited or vague, depending on whether the goal is to study a terrain or to emotionally disorient oneself. It should not be forgotten that these two aspects of *dérives* overlap in so many ways that it is impossible to isolate one of them in a pure state. But the use of taxis, for example, can provide a clear enough dividing line: If in the course of a *dérive* one takes a taxi, either to get to a specific destination or simply to move, say, twenty minutes to the west, one is concerned primarily with personal disorientation. If, on the other hand, one sticks to the direct exploration of a particular terrain, one is concentrating primarily on research for a psychogeographical urbanism.

Space
of
Action
purpose
fully
vague
or
specific
Goal
of
learning or disorientation

How small or large a physical space does the action take place in?

In every case the spatial field depends first of all on the point of departure—the residence of the solo dériver or the meeting place selected by a group. The maximum area of this spatial field does not extend beyond the entirety of a large city and its suburbs. At its minimum it can be limited to a small self-contained ambience: a single neighborhood or even a single block of houses if it's interesting enough (the extreme case being a static-dérive of an entire day within the Saint-Lazare train station).

= context

How far into the space of action may we go?

The exploration of a fixed spatial field entails establishing bases and calculating directions of penetration. It is here that the study of maps comes in—ordinary ones as well as ecological and psycho-geographical ones—along with their correction and improvement. It should go without saying that we are not at all interested in any mere exoticism that may arise from the fact that one is exploring a neighborhood for the first time. Besides its unimportance, this aspect of the problem is completely subjective and soon fades away.

where may we go?

In the "possible rendezvous," on the other hand, the element of exploration is minimal in comparison with that of behavioral disorientation. The subject is invited to come alone to a certain place at a specified time. He is freed from the bothersome obligations of the ordinary rendezvous since there is no one to wait for. But since this "possible rendezvous" has brought him without warning to a place he may or may not know, he observes the surroundings. It may be that the same spot has been specified for a "possible rendezvous" for someone else whose identity he has no way of knowing. Since he may never even have seen the other person before, he will be encouraged to start up conversations with various passersby. He may meet no one, or he may even by chance meet the person who has arranged the "possible rendezvous." In any case, particularly if the time and place have been well chosen, his use of time will take an unexpected turn. He may even telephone someone else who doesn't know where the first "possible rendezvous" has taken him, in order to ask for another one to be specified. One can see the virtually unlimited resources of this pastime.

Change new encounter after may occur = Art

Our rather anarchic lifestyle and even certain amusements considered dubious that have always been enjoyed among our entourage—slipping by night into houses undergoing demolition, hitchhiking nonstop and without destination through Paris during a transportation strike in the name of adding to the confusion, wandering in subterranean catacombs forbidden to the public, etc.—are expressions of a more general sensibility which is no different from that of the dérive. Written descriptions can be no more than passwords to this great game.

Dérive

May 68 = Dérive

Art work could be mapping the actions space

Mapping the movement of the individual in the city of
forces
The lessons drawn from dérives enable us to draft the first surveys of the psychogeographical articulations of a modern city. Beyond the discovery of unities of ambience, of their main components and their spatial localization, one comes to perceive their principal axes of passage, their exits and their defenses. One arrives at the central hypothesis of the existence of psychogeographical pivotal points. One measures the distances that actually separate two regions of a city, distances that may have little relation with the physical distance between them. With the aid of old maps, aerial photographs and experimental dérives, one can draw up hitherto lacking maps of influences, maps whose inevitable imprecision at this early stage is no worse than that of the earliest navigational charts. The only difference is that it is no longer a matter of precisely delineating stable continents, but of changing architecture and urbanism.

Today the different unities of atmosphere and of dwellings are not precisely marked off, but are surrounded by more or less extended bordering regions. The most general change that derive experiences lead to proposing is the constant diminution of these border regions, up to the point of their complete suppression.

Within architecture itself, the taste for deriving tends to promote all sorts of new forms of labyrinths made possible by modern techniques of construction. Thus in March 1955 the press reported the construction in New York of a building in which one can see the first signs of an opportunity to dérive inside an apartment:

The apartments of the helicoidal building will be shaped like slices of cake. One will be able to enlarge or reduce them by shifting movable partitions. The half-floor gradations avoid limiting the number of rooms, since the tenant can request the use of the adjacent section on either upper or lower levels. With this setup three four-room apartments can be transformed into one twelve-room apartment in less than six hours.

(To be continued.)

GUY DEBORD

People
don't
+ relations
are all
socially
mapped
what
happens
if the
Artist
makes
new
maps
for
these
forms.

U+G: Détournement (aspiration)
situationists suggest ~~Détournement~~ Oc + Re
territorialism Capitalist subjects & objects

Détournement as Negation and Prelude

Détournement, the reuse of preexisting artistic elements in a new ensemble, has been a constantly present tendency of the contemporary avant-garde, both before and since the formation of the SI. The two fundamental laws of détournement are the loss of importance of each detoured autonomous element—which may go so far as to completely lose its original sense—and at the same time the organization of another meaningful ensemble that confers on each element its new scope and effect.

Détournement has a peculiar power which obviously stems from the double meaning, from the enrichment of most of the terms by the coexistence within them of their old and new senses. And it is very practical because it's so easy to use and because of its inexhaustible potential for reuse. Concerning the negligible effort required for détournement, we have already noted that "the cheapness of its products is the heavy artillery that breaks through all the Chinese walls of understanding" ("A User's Guide to Détournement," May 1956). But these points would not by themselves justify recourse to this method, which the same text describes as "clashing head-on against all social and legal conventions." Détournement has a historical significance. What is it?

"Détournement is a game made possible by the capacity of *devaluation*," writes Jorn in his study *Detoured Painting* (May 1959), and he goes on to say that all the elements of the cultural past must be "reinvested" or disappear. Détournement is thus first of all a negation of the value of the previous organization of expression. It arises and grows increasingly stronger in the historical period of the decomposition of artistic expression. But at the same time, the attempts to reuse the "detournable bloc" as material for other ensembles express the search for a vaster construction, a new genre of creation at a higher level.

The SI is a very special kind of movement, different in nature from preceding artistic avant-gardes. Within culture, the SI can be likened to a research laboratory, for example, or to a party in which we are situationists but nothing that we do can yet be situationist. This is not a disavowal for anyone. We are partisans of a certain future of culture

Art models

Art made

and of life. Situationist activity is a particular craft that we are not yet practicing.

Ex 1

Thus the signature of the situationist movement, the sign of its presence and contestation within contemporary cultural reality (since we cannot represent any common style whatsoever), is first of all the use of détournement. Examples of our use of detourned expression include Jorn's altered paintings; Debord and Jorn's book *Mémoires*, "composed entirely of prefabricated elements," in which the writing on each page runs in all directions and the reciprocal relations of the phrases are invariably uncompleted; Constant's projects for detourned sculptures; and Debord's detourned documentary film, *On the Passage of a Few Persons Through a Rather Brief Unity of Time*. At the stage of what the "User's Guide" calls "ultra-détournement, that is, the tendencies for détournement to operate in everyday social life" (e.g. passwords or the wearing of disguises, belonging to the sphere of play), we might mention, at different levels, Gallizio's industrial painting; Wyckaert's "orchestral" project for assembly-line painting with a division of labor based on color; and numerous détournements of buildings that were at the origin of unitary urbanism. But we should also mention in this context the SI's very forms of "organization" and propaganda.

At this point in the world's development, all forms of expression are losing their grip on reality and being reduced to self-parody. As the readers of this journal can frequently verify, present-day writing invariably has an element of parody. As the "User's Guide" notes: "It is necessary to envisage a parodic-serious stage where the accumulation of detourned elements, far from aiming to arouse indignation or laughter by alluding to some original work, will express our indifference toward a meaningless and forgotten original, and concern itself with rendering a certain sublimity."

time for Sit. Art

This combination of parody and seriousness reflects the contradictions of an era in which we find ourselves confronted with both the urgent necessity and the near impossibility of initiating and carrying out a totally innovative collective action—an era in which the most serious ventures are masked in the ambiguous interplay between art and its necessary negation, and in which the essential voyages of discovery have been undertaken by such astonishingly incapable people.

Questionnaire

1. What does the word "situationist" mean?

It denotes an activity aimed at creating situations, as opposed to passively recognizing them in academic or other separate terms. At all levels of social practice or individual history. We replace existential passivity with the construction of moments of life, and doubt with playful affirmation. Up till now philosophers and artists have only interpreted situations; the point now is to transform them. Since human beings are molded by the situations they go through, it is essential to create human situations. Since individuals are defined by their situation, they need the power to create situations worthy of their desires. This is the perspective in which poetry (communication fulfilled in concrete situations), the appropriation of nature, and complete social liberation must all merge and be realized. Our era is going to replace the fixed frontier of the extreme situations that phenomenology has limited itself to describing with the practical creation of situations; it is going to continually shift this frontier with the development of our realization. We want a phenomeno-praxis. We have no doubt that this will be the first banality of the movement toward the liberation that is now possible. What situations are to be transformed? At different levels it could be the whole planet, or an era (a civilization in Burckhardt's sense, for example), or a moment of individual life. On with the show! It is only in this way that the values of past culture and the hopes of realizing reason in history can find their true fulfillment. Everything else is in decay. The term situationist in the SI's sense is the total opposite of the current usage in Portugal, where "situationists" refers to supporters of the existing situation (i.e. supporters of Salazar's dictatorship).

W
CG =
situations

2. Is the Situationist International a political movement?

The words "political movement" today connote the specialized activity of group and party bosses who derive the oppressive force of their future power from the organized passivity of their militants. The SI wants nothing to do with any form of hierarchical power whatsoever. The SI is neither a political movement nor a sociology of political mystification. The SI aims to represent the highest degree of international revolutionary consciousness. This is why it strives to illuminate and coordinate the gestures of refusal and the signs of creativity that

instead

mind freedom

are defining the new contours of the proletariat, the irreducible desire for freedom. Centered on the spontaneity of the masses, such activity is undeniably "political" in the sense that those rebellious masses are themselves political. Whenever new radical currents appear—as recently in Japan (the extremist wing of the Zengakuren), in the Congo, and in the Spanish underground—the SI gives them *critical* support* and thereby aids them practically. But in contrast to all the "transitional programs" of specialized politics, the SI insists on a permanent revolution of everyday life.

OBSERVE... what is that?

MAY 68. IS MAY 68 A SIT. ACTION?

3. Is the SI an artistic movement?

A large part of the situationist critique of consumer society consists in showing to what extent contemporary artists, by abandoning the richness of supersession implicitly present (though not fully realized) in the 1910-1925 period, have condemned themselves to doing art as one does business. Since that time artistic movements have only been imaginary repercussions from an explosion that never took place, an explosion that threatened and still threatens the structures of this society. The SI's awareness of this abandonment and of its contradictory implications (emptiness and a desire to return to the initial violence) makes the SI the only movement able, by incorporating the survival of art into the art of life, to speak to the project of the authentic artist. We are artists only insofar as we are no longer artists: we come to fulfill art.

ASAMSK

not making art product = art

4. Is the SI an expression of nihilism?

OBSERVE... OF EXISTENTIAL CRISIS

The SI refuses the role that would be readily granted it in the spectacle of decomposition. The supersession of nihilism is reached by way of the decomposition of the spectacle; which is precisely what the SI is working on. Whatever is elaborated and constructed outside such a perspective will collapse of its own dead weight without needing any help from the SI. But it is also true that everywhere in consumer society wastelands of spontaneous collapse are offering a terrain of experimentation for new values that the SI cannot do without. We can build only on the ruins of the spectacle. Moreover, the fully justified anticipation of a total destruction precludes any construction that is not carried out in the perspective of the totality.

HYPER-visual phenomenon the mess of capitalist

5. Are the situationist positions utopian?

Reality is superseding utopia. There is no longer any point in projecting imaginary bridges between the wealth of present technological potentials and the poverty of their use by the rulers of every variety. We want to put the material equipment at the service of everyone's creativ-

SOCIETY IS AN ART TERRAIN WORTH EXPLORE

not just ideas
ity, as the masses themselves always strive to do in revolutionary situations. It's simply a matter of coordination or tactics. Everything we deal with is realizable, either immediately or in the short term, once our methods of research and activity begin to be put in practice.

an a.i. system that can be put into place quickly & w/ most means
6. Do you consider it necessary to call yourselves "situationists"?

In the existing order, where things take the place of people, any label is compromising. The one we have chosen, however, embodies its own critique, in that it is automatically opposed to any "situationism," the label that others would like to saddle us with. Moreover, it will disappear when all of us have become fully situationist and are no longer proletarians struggling for the end of the proletariat. For the moment, however ridiculous a label may be, ours has the merit of drawing a sharp line between the previous incoherence and a new level of rigor. Such incisiveness is just what has been most lacking in the thought of the last few decades.

7. What is original about the situationists, considered as a distinct group?

It seems to us that three notable points justify the importance that we attribute to ourselves as an organized group of theorists and experimenters. First, we are developing for the first time, from a revolutionary perspective, a new, coherent critique of this society as it is developing *now*. This critique is deeply anchored in the culture and art of our time, which can in fact be truly grasped only by means of such a critique (this work is obviously a long way from completion). Second, we make a practice of breaking completely and definitively with all those who oblige us to do so, and with anyone else who remains in solidarity with them. Such polarization is vital in a time when the diverse forms of resignation are so subtly intertwined and interdependent. Third, we are initiating a new style of relation with our "partisans": we absolutely refuse disciples. We are interested only in participation at the highest level, and in setting autonomous people loose in the world.

8. Why don't people talk about the SI?

The SI is talked about often enough among the specialized owners of decomposing modern thought; but they write about it very little. In the broadest sense this is because we refuse the term "situationism," which would be the only pigeonhole enabling us to be introduced into the reigning spectacle, incorporated in the form of a doctrine petrified against us, in the form of an ideology in Marx's sense. It is natural that

the spectacle we reject rejects us in turn. Situationists are more readily discussed as individuals in an effort to separate them from the collective contestation, although this collective contestation is in fact the only thing that makes them “interesting” individuals. Situationists are talked about *the moment they cease to be situationists* (as with the rival varieties of “Nashism” in several countries, whose only common claim to fame is that they lyingly pretend to have some sort of relationship with the SI). The spectacle’s watchdogs appropriate fragments of situationist theory without acknowledgment in order to turn it against us. It is quite natural that they get ideas from us in their struggle for the survival of the spectacle. But they have to conceal their source, not merely to protect their reputation for originality from charges of plagiarism, but because this source implies the broader, coherent context of these “ideas.” Moreover, many hesitant intellectuals do not dare to speak openly of the SI because to speak of it entails taking a minimum position—saying what one rejects of it and what one accepts of it. Many of them believe, quite mistakenly, that to feign ignorance of it in the meantime will suffice to clear them of responsibility later.

9. What support do you give to the revolutionary movement?

Unfortunately there isn’t one. The society certainly contains contradictions and is undergoing changes; this is what, in continually new ways, is making revolutionary activity possible and necessary. But such activity no longer exists—or does not yet exist—in the form of an organized movement. It is therefore not a matter of “supporting” such a movement, but of creating it: of inseparably defining it and experimenting with it. Admitting that there is no revolutionary movement is the first precondition for developing such a movement. Anything else is a ridiculous patching up of the past.

10. Are you Marxists?

Just as much as Marx was when he said, “I am not a Marxist.”

11. Is there a relation between your theories and your actual way of life?

Our theories are nothing other than the theory of our real life and of the possibilities experienced or perceived in it. As fragmented as the available terrains of activity may be for the moment, we make the most of them. We treat enemies as enemies, a first step we recommend to everyone as an accelerated apprenticeship in learning how to think. It also goes without saying that we unconditionally support all forms of liberated behavior, everything that the bourgeois and bureaucratic

scum call debauchery. It is obviously out of the question that we pave the way for the revolution of everyday life with asceticism.

12. Are the situationists in the vanguard of leisure society?

Leisure society is an appearance that veils a particular type of production/consumption of social space-time. If the time of productive work in the strict sense is reduced, the reserve army of industrial life works in consumption. Everyone is successively worker and raw material in the industry of vacations, of leisure, of spectacles. Present work is the alpha and omega of present life. The organization of consumption plus the organization of leisure must exactly counterbalance the organization of work. "Free time" is a most ironic quantity in the context of the flow of a prefabricated time. Alienated work can only produce alienated leisure, for the idle (increasingly, in fact, merely semi-idle) elite as well as for the masses who are obtaining access to brief periods of leisure. No lead shielding can insulate either a fragment of time or the entire time of a fragment of society from the radiation of alienated labor, because that labor shapes the totality of products and of social life in its own image.

13. Who finances you?

We have never been able to be financed except, in a very precarious manner, by working in the present cultural economy. This employment is subject to the following contradiction: we have such creative abilities that we can be virtually assured of "success" in any field; yet we have such a rigorous insistence on independence and complete consistency between our project and each of our present creations (see our definition of antisituationist artistic production)* that we are almost totally unacceptable to the dominant cultural organization, even in the most secondary activities. The state of our resources follows from these conditions. In this connection, see what we wrote in issue #8 of this journal (p. 26) about "the capital that is never lacking for Nashist enterprises" and, in contrast, *our conditions* (on the last page of this issue).*

14. How many of you are there?

A few more than the original guerrilla nucleus in the Sierra Madre, but with fewer weapons. A few less than the delegates in London in 1864 who founded the International Working Men's Association, but with a more coherent program. As unyielding as the Greeks at Thermopylae ("Passerby, go tell them at Lakedaimon..."), but with a brighter future.*

power built on the ruins of precapitalist colonial society is not the abolition of class antagonisms; it merely substitutes new classes, new conditions of oppression and new forms of struggle for the old ones.

10

The only people who are really underd... those who see a positive value in the power of their masters... up with capitalist reification remains the best road to... develop- ment. The question of economic development is... in the question of who is the real owner of the economy, ... ter of labor power. Everything else is nothing but the babble ... ists.

11

So far the revolutions in the underdeveloped countries have only tried to imitate Bolshevism in various ways. From now on the point is to go beyond it through the *power of soviets*.*

Note: More militant change of tone in title & text

MUSTAPHA KHAYATI

Minimum Definition of Revolutionary Organizations

Since the only purpose of a revolutionary organization is the abolition of all existing classes in a way that does not bring about a new division of society, we consider an organization to be revolutionary if it *consistently and effectively* works toward the international realization of the absolute power of the workers councils, as prefigured in the experience of the proletarian revolutions of this century.

Such an organization makes an integral critique of the world, or is nothing. By integral critique we mean a comprehensive critique of all geographical areas where various forms of separate socioeconomic powers exist, as well as a comprehensive critique of all aspects of life.

Such an organization sees the beginning and end of its program in the complete decolonization of everyday life. It thus aims not at the masses' self-management of the existing world, but at its uninterrupted transformation. It embodies the radical critique of *political economy*, the supersession of the commodity system and of wage labor.

Such an organization refuses to reproduce within itself any of the hierarchical conditions of the dominant world. The only limit to par- the inherent structure of the org in political commodity

DEBORD FILM
SEPARATION
PERFECTEDNO
ownership
of
ideas

participating in its total democracy is that each member must have recognized and appropriated the coherence of its critique. This coherence must be both in the critical theory as such and in the relation between this theory and practical activity. The organization radically criticizes every ideology as separate power of ideas and as ideas of separate power. It is thus at the same time the negation of any remnants of religion, and of the prevailing social spectacle which, from news media to mass culture, monopolizes communication between people around their unilateral reception of images of their alienated activity. The organization dissolves any "revolutionary ideology," unmasking it as a sign of the failure of the revolutionary project, as the private property of new specialists of power, as one more fraudulent representation setting itself above real proletarianized life.

LPE VS IDEOLOGY

Since the *ultimate criterion* of the modern revolutionary organization is its comprehensiveness, such an organization is ultimately a critique of politics. It must explicitly aim to dissolve itself as a separate organization at its moment of victory.

Once successful must re-look at conditions & strategy
& re-evaluate its project
Adopted by the 7th Conference of the SI (July 1966)
version for existence

Three Postscripts to the Previous Issue

It seems to us that the insurrections of the blacks in Newark and Detroit have indisputably confirmed our 1965 analysis of the Watts riot. In particular, the participation of numerous whites in the looting demonstrates that in its deepest sense Watts really was "a revolt against the commodity," an elemental reaction to the world of "commodity abundance." On the other hand, the danger represented by the *leadership* that is trying to constitute itself above the movement is now taking more definite shape: the Newark Conference has adopted the essential features of the Black Muslim program of black capitalism. Stokely Carmichael and the other "Black Power" stars are walking the tight-rope between the *vague and undefined* extremism necessary to establish themselves at the head of the black masses (Mao, Castro, power to the blacks and we don't even have to say what we're going to do about the 9/10 of the population who are white) and the *actual* unavowed paltry *reformism* of a black "third party," which would auction off its swing vote in the American political marketplace and which would eventually create, in the person of Carmichael and his colleagues, an "elite" like

A Revolutionary Program

those that emerged out of the other American minorities (Poles, Italians, etc.), an elite that has so far never developed among the blacks.

* * *

In Algeria, too, Boumédiénne has unfortunately proved the correctness of our analysis of his regime. Self-management there is now completely dead. We have no doubt we will eventually see it return under more favorable conditions. But for the moment no revolutionary network has succeeded in forming on the basis of the offensive resistance of the self-managed sector; and our own direct efforts toward this goal have been extremely inadequate.

* * *

Daniel Guérin wrote to us to say that our note about him was unfair and that he wanted to explain himself. We met him. He had to admit that we gave a correct account of his analysis of Algeria, which is at the opposite pole from ours. He complained only of having been presented as a sort of agent of Ben Bella. We stated that our note in no way suggests such an idea. Guérin explained his admiration for Ben Bella by psychological arguments whose sincerity we don't question: He had found Ben Bella very likable, particularly after thirty years of disappointments with his other militant anticolonialist North African friends, who have generally ended up becoming government officials. Ben Bella remained a man of the people, that was his good side. He became President of the Republic, that was his failing. Guérin already found Ben Bella's Algeria "miraculous" and reproached us for demanding a succession of additional miracles. We replied that such a succession was precisely our conception of revolution, and that any single "miracle" that remains miraculous (i.e. isolated and exceptional) will quickly disappear. We proposed to Guérin that he publish a text in response to our article; but he considered that his oral explanation was sufficient.

Americans in Paris; A Situationist Exchange

For three weeks in May 2011, a class organized by New York University's Steinhardt Art Department is being held at the Centre Saint Charles of the Paris 1 Panthéon - Sorbonne University, to consider the legacy of Situationist ideas about art and politics for artists and students working at this historical moment. Forty-three years ago, in 1968, the Sorbonne was the central staging area for a student-instigated rebellion, alternately referred to as the May Rebellion, or the Occupations Movement, which led to wildcat strikes which shut down Paris and very nearly brought down the De Gaulle government. We return to the Sorbonne now to consider how the Situationist's ideas might have meaning for contemporary students and faculty

The class has very much been a “dérive” bringing together a diverse groups of students from the US and Paris, to create a series of discussions, actions and artworks which have been spontaneous and, we hope in the end, passionate.

This book represents the lecture notes from the initial class sessions, and will be followed by an appendix containing student and faculty responses and work from the class. We thank the Sorbonne's faculty and students for participating in this project, with Special appreciation to Professor Yann Toma, and his colleagues to offering us this opportunity.

Nancy Barton and Michael Cohen

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