

Guy Debord

CORRESPONDENCE

THE FOUNDATION OF THE SITUATIONIST
INTERNATIONAL (JUNE 1957-AUGUST 1960)



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Introduction by McKenzie Wark

Translated by Stuart Kendall and John McHale

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THE SECRETARY

Deadlines, delays, and debts. These are the three inevitable topics around which Debord's letters circle. Of all the roles he chose for himself, not to mention those assigned to him by posterity, the one that receives the least attention is that of secretary. Late in life he was to say: "I have been a good professional—but of what?"¹ While the question was meant to be rhetorical, one not entirely implausible answer would be, "secretary."

When he wrote the first letter in this volume, Debord had achieved some notoriety with his film *Howls for Sade*, and had drawn around himself the motley collection of drunks, drifters, and geniuses known as the Letterist International. He had painted its slogan by the banks of the river Seine: "Never work!" And had done his best to live up to that injunction. He was coming to realize that it implied another, and even harder discipline, the unwritten slogan: "Make no art!"

The Letterist International was a young people's affair. They split off from Isidore Isou's Letterist movement, discarding his self-referential theories and personality cult. What they took with them was a certain

1. Debord, *Panegyric*.

practice of intellectual seduction and the ambition to chisel modern art down to nothing, to clear the ground for something else. The Letterist International dreamed big. They foresaw the end of the workhouse of modernist form, they discovered a new city via a calculated drifting (the *dérive*) through the old one. Theirs would be a city of play, love, and adventure, made for forging new passions.

But even to *propose* a new architecture for a new way of life took more resources than the Letterists possessed. “To reach this superior cultural creation—what we call the Situationist game—we now think it is necessary to be an active force in the actual sphere of this era’s culture (and not on the fringes of it, as we cheerfully were ...).” Hence a change of policy from the “pure (inactive) extremism” of the Letterist International.² Going forward called for taking a few steps back. The program would—temporarily—require some resources to advance its program and its propaganda. The SI must proceed “by all means, even artistic ones.”³

Debord skillfully positioned himself as the secretary for a new movement, the Situationist International. It was born in 1957 out of the fusion of two and a half existing groups, the Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, the Lettrist International, and the London Psychogeographical Association (the last was represented by its only member, Ralph Rumney). Its founding conference took place in Cosio d’Arroscia, a little Ligurian town where founding member Piero Simondo’s family had a small hotel. Or at least that is the official story. Debord writes: “I agree with you that we should present the ‘Cosio conference’ as a point of departure for our distinct organized activity.”⁴ From the beginning, Debord has a fine hand for the tactics of appearances.

2. (Straram 3 Oct 58).

3. (Constant 7 Sept 59).

4. (Jorn 1 Sept 57).

The secretary’s task, as Debord conceived it, involves the organizing of exhibitions, provocations, occasional publications, and above all the journal, *Internationale Situationniste*.⁵ It is, Debord writes, “our ‘official organ,’ the ideological coherence of which was made my responsibility.”⁶ Debord will act as its secretary with remarkable tenacity and industry. *Internationale Situationniste* would not be a duplicated flyer like the Letterist International’s *Potlatch*, but a beautifully edited, illustrated, designed and bound affair. By 1960 the author of “Never work!” would be complaining: “I am overwhelmed with work.”⁷

Debord labored in the service of producing *Internationale Situationniste* as a collective expression, a document of a provisional micro-society whose practice is to treat all of culture as collective property. “Our editorial board has a heavy hand (and, as you may imagine, no respect for literary propriety.)”⁸ It is a striking precursor to the copyleft and creative commons movements of more recent times. “All the material published by the SI is, in principle, usable by everyone, even without acknowledgement, with no concerns as to literary property ... You can make all the *détournements* that appear useful to you.”⁹ *Détournement*, or the appropriation and correction of culture as common property, was both a signature Situationist practice and a theory of how culture as a totality works.

One makes a movement with what one has. The practice of *expelling* members from the Situationist International began very soon after its founding. As a good secretary, Debord has little tolerance for opportunism or ineptitude. As Debord wrote to Walter Olmo, a founding member: “I reproach you for having accepted, in this particular circumstance, several ideas that are stupid.”¹⁰ Olmo would not last long. Ralph

5. IS.
6. (Korun 16 June 58).
7. (Wyckaert 22 June 60).
8. (Ovadia 30 Mar 60).
9. (Straram 12 Nov 58).
10. (Olmo 18 Oct 57).

Rumney lasted almost a year.¹¹ Debord writes to him in March 1958: “you still haven’t done any real work with us.”¹² To compound Debord’s annoyance, Rumney boasted of his Situationist connections to art world acquaintances. The SI required a certain rigor: “I am with the SI and, as long as I am in it, I will keep a minimum of discipline that precludes all collaboration with uncontrollable elements ...”¹³ To today’s individualist sensibility, submission to a discipline for reasons other than getting paid seems like some kind of perversion, and for that reason membership in the Situationist International seems as unintelligible a sacrifice as the mysteries of religion.

The expulsion of members is sometimes taken to reveal some sinister side to Debord’s character, so it is interesting to read here in the correspondence that “Jorn was the first supporter of the measure of expulsion.”¹⁴ Asger Jorn, like Debord a founding member, was unlike Debord one of the few Situationists who had ever been a member of an orthodox Communist party. But while the SI is often compared to such a party, this parallel is usually made by people who were never members of one. Certainly to an ear trained by the Cold War to protect its precious individualism the SI can sound like invasive body snatcher, as for example in this telegram to an excluded member: “The ‘I’ without the ‘we’ falls back into the prefabricated mass.”¹⁵ But perhaps what the SI was struggling to achieve was a new kind of collective being, unlike either party or avant-garde.

Situationists were expected to know what was expected of them without being told. Debord’s policy as secretary was “to place *a priori* confidence, in all cases, and only until *the first proof to the contrary*, in a certain number of comrades recognized on the basis of objective

11. Expelled 4th April 1958. See *The Consul: conversations with Ralph Rumney* (Verso Books, London, 2002).

12. (Rumney 13 March 58).

13. (Constant 21 June 60).

14. (Constant 2 June 60).

15. (Melanotte 10 Feb 59).

criteria.”¹⁶ The reason for most expulsions is not mysterious. It was a failure to live up to expectations. Members are what they do: “No problem in our collective action can be resolved by goodwill.”¹⁷ A certain unsentimental understanding of how friendships form and dissolve, of how character becomes different to itself as it struggles in and against time, underlies the distinctive quality of Situationist subjectivity, where “neither freedom nor intelligence are given once and for all.”¹⁸

Not the least difference between the SI and the party is that the SI rarely recruited. “I have no need to fabricate *fake disciples*.”¹⁹ Nor did it require adherence to doctrinal orthodoxy. “Of course, never any *doctrine*: perspectives. A solidarity around these perspectives.”²⁰ Indeed, doctrinaire postures could be grounds for expulsion. Debord writes to Simondo: “*situationism*, as a body of doctrine, does not exist and must not exist. What exists is a *Situationist* experimental attitude.”²¹ To Pinot Gallizio, the key figure among the Italian SI founders, he writes: “We have always been sure you were strongly opposed to the metaphysics whose dogmas Simondo is now revealing.”²² The exclusion of Gallizio would take a while longer than that of Simondo.

Debord speaks often of “propaganda,” and even of “*internal propaganda*.”²³ Both for external and internal purposes, statements were to be formed and made tactically. The SI formed itself in part out of the material of the art world, but anticipated the overcoming of art as a separate practice. What is hard to grasp via the individualist sensibility of what Debord will call “bourgeois civilization” is that there really might have been a threat to the organization in the form of the opportunistic exploitation of the potential cachet of the SI, particularly by its artist-members. The SI was never an “artistic” avant

16. (Frankin 26 Jan 60).

17. (Korun 16 June 58).

18. (Straram 25 Aug 60).

19. (Gallizio 13 Jan 58).

20. (Straram 12 Nov 58).

21. (Simondo 22 Aug 57).

22. (Gallizio 23 Nov 57).

23. (Constant 16 Sept 59).

garde: “we already have amongst us too many young artistic elderly who have missed out on their own 19th century.”²⁴ Artists were only accepted as members if they appeared ready for a “sudden development” beyond art.

The SI struggled to create new collaborative play-forms out of the old materials of the separate creative practices, of which art was just one. The moments of inclusion and exclusion within the SI are best explored in relation to this strategy, rather than attempting to decode them as banal dramas of personality. “The most urgent problem, tactically, is to first *balance*, then as soon as possible *surpass* the number of painters in the SI with the largest possible number of architects, urbanists, sociologists, and others.”²⁵ This ambition came with its own dangers. “We can hardly have confidence in ‘specialized collaborators’ who do not share Situationist experimental positions. Otherwise, we will discover bitterly that the architects, sociologists, urbanists, etc., are as limited as painters in their defense of the particular prejudices of their separated sectors.”²⁶

As secretary, Debord tacks this way and that, trying to keep the SI together. Debord’s problems are compounded by the presence of several powerful personalities in the early days of the Situationist International, all of them his senior. Around the time the SI was founded, Debord was 25, Constant Nieuwenhuys was 37, Asger Jorn was 43, Pinot Gallizio was 55. These discrepancies should, I think, be born in mind when reading his letters to each of them. Given his relative youth, the self-confidence of the letters is extraordinary. The tone of Debord’s writing changes considerably in his attempts to mesh with each of these outsize personalities, even if he does not lack for confidence in calling all of them to account.

24. (Constant 16 Oct 59).

25. (Constant 3 March 59).

26. (Constant 28 Feb 59).

Giuseppe Gallizio—Pinot to his friends—was, by his own account, an “archaeologist, botanist, chemist, *parfumeur*, partisan, king of the gypsies.”²⁷ And one could add: an inventor of performance art, the installation, and ambient music. It was he, together with Asger Jorn, who brought together the Congress of Free Artists in 1956 in Gallizio’s hometown of Alba. This was the event which laid the groundwork for the formation of the Situationist International the following year in Cosio, where he would become a founding member.

Gallizio’s approach was consistently experimental, and he saw the materials and practices of an experimental comportment as available to everyone. Gallizio called his work *ensemble painting*. His goal was an *antipatent* process for the sharing and modification of life. Gallizio’s ensembles did not just produce rare and singular works like other artists. They produced *industrial painting*. These were only very minimally the product of actual machines. The idea was more that painting could be made using mechanisms of repetition and variation to undermine the unique gesture. The result would bring together the creative and singular with the serial and repeated, in what Michèle Bernstein called “a shrewd mixture of chance and mechanics.”²⁸

The language of Debord’s letters to Gallizio matches the latter’s exuberant prose, and as Debord writes to his “great and noble friend,” “the basis of our agreement is only to expect the extraordinary.”²⁹ Debord puts considerable energy into arranging Gallizio’s debut in the French and German art worlds, but discovers to his disgust that not only is Gallizio fully recuperated by that art world, he is willingly so. At first all goes well: “The tumult over your glory grows great, despite the discretion we maintain.”³⁰ Art world success is Gallizio’s downfall

27. Giorgina Bertolino et al., eds., *Pinot Gallizio: Il laboratorio della scrittura* (Milan: Charta, 2005), p. 20.

28. Michèle Bernstein, “In Praise of Pinot Gallizio,” in McDonough, *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, p. 70.

29. (Gallizio 30 Jan 58).

30. (Gallizio 30 Jan 58).

within the SI. This is less the fault of the exhibition itself than of the way it is used tactically: “The most serious shortcoming was that Pinot, in his practical attitude towards the Parisian painting public, more or less consciously accepted the role of a very ordinary artist recognized by his peers (by contrast, the exhibition of *détourned* paintings by Jorn was, I believe, a very sharp break with this milieu ...”³¹ The upshot was the exclusion of Gallizio and his son Giors Melanotte for “sickening *arrivisme*.”³²

While Debord could recognize, even in retrospect, Gallizio’s “virtuosity,” he was nevertheless the “right wing” of the Situationist International.³³ Its “left wing” was Constant Nieuwenhuys, known as Constant. He had been a member of the avant-garde painting and poetry group COBRA with Jorn, but had moved away from painting towards experiments in new kinds of potential urban form. In the “Amsterdam Declaration” of 1958, Debord and Constant called for “the development of complete environments, which must extend to a unitary urbanism,” which they saw as “the complex, ongoing activity that consciously recreates man’s environment according to the most advanced conceptions in every domain” which would be the “result of a new type of collective creativity.”³⁴

Constant developed *unitary urbanism* through an astonishing series of wire and Perspex models, a project Debord named for him *New Babylon*. Constant’s ambitions were, extravagant as it may sound, more than utopian. He sought to both realize and abolish utopia. *New Babylon* is a whole world at play, or at least it appears so if considered on the horizontal plane. As architectural scholar Mark Wigley writes: “*New Babylon* is a seemingly infinite playground. Its occupants continually

31. (Constant 20th May 59).

32. (Constant 2 June 60).

33. (Constant 26 Nov 59).

34. Constant & Debord, “Amsterdam Declaration,” IS #2 Dec 58.

rearrange their sensory environment, redefining every microspace within the sectors according to their latest desires. In a society of endless leisure, workers become players and architecture is the only game in town.”³⁵ Considered vertically, *New Babylon* makes literal Marx’s diagram of base and superstructure. Its elevated sectors are literally superstructures, made possible by an infrastructure below ground where mechanical reproduction has abolished scarcity and freed all of time from necessity. It is an image of what Constant imagines the development of productive forces has made possible, but which the fetter of existing relations of production prevents from coming into being.

Constant will come to reject art in general, and painting in particular, and like Gallizio posit the machine as the central fact of contemporary creativity. As Constant writes: “A free art of the future is an art that would master and use all the new conditioning techniques.”³⁶ Yet Constant and Gallizio were in many respects quite incompatible figures, and not just as personalities. For Constant, art had come to an end. All of the separate arts are superceded by a unitary urbanism of constructed situations. In principle, Debord agrees. “No painting is defensible from a Situationist point of view.”³⁷ But where Constant insists on the principle, the secretary does not want to get too far ahead of the level of consciousness of the SI membership. “Yes, any spirit of the ‘pictorial’ must be stamped out and this, even though it’s obvious, isn’t easy to get everyone to acknowledge.”³⁸

Debord looks to Constant as a tactical ally within the SI, but tries strenuously to keep him from pushing the organization too far too fast. He wants Constant to work on the editorial line for the journal with this in mind: “This will certainly help the really experimental

35. Mark Wigley, ed., *Another City for Another Life: Constant’s New Babylon*, Drawing Papers 3 (New York: The Drawing Center, 1999), p. 9.

36. Constant, “On Our Means and Our Perspectives” (1958), *The Decomposition of the Artist*, p. a7. See also (Constant 25 Sept 58).

37. (Constant 25 Sept 58).

38. (Constant 8 Aug 58).

faction in the SI.”³⁹ But Debord is initially not ready to break with Gallizio or Jorn, both of whom are earning Constant’s stern disapproval as “artists.” “I don’t have the right—and I do not have the least desire—to try to impose directives and values on painters (for instance) *except in the name of a real movement that is more advanced than their work.*”⁴⁰ A shrewd move, since for Debord to attempt to direct the painters would only draw him—and the SI—deeper into the obsessions of the art world.

The unraveling of Debord’s relationship with Constant is the great moment in this volume of the letters, and it shapes the early development of the SI. Debord is caught between the left and right wings of the movement. And while the artists are, one by one, expelled, Constant is hardly appeased and resigns anyway, and the movement, so to speak, moves on. But this is the moment, like the opening scene in a novel or film, where circumstances are open, where many things are possible. One discovers, in the first three years of the SI, and particularly in this account of that time in these letters, many possible versions of the SI, besides the one of historical record (and legend). This is perhaps why we keep returning to the SI, and to its early years in particular, as the scene of a moment in a still-living cultural movement.

It would be quite possible to imagine a Gallizio-SI, a Jorn-SI, or a Constant-SI, had any of these figures had the will or the ability to outmaneuver Debord within the organization. And indeed, small industries of publication, scholarship, and exhibition arose lately around each such phantom SI, and each are in their own way valid and fascinating projects, each with certain limitations. Each uses the bodies of work produced by its star subject to default toward a conventional kind of art historical account, as if Gallizio, Jorn, or Constant were

39. (Constant 8 Aug 58).

40. (Constant 7 Sept 59).

really just artists, after all. The *Correspondence* makes the case that the exclusions were the very practice through which the SI maintained its intellectual focus, and that Debord's judgments, whether we agree with them or not, were not purely capricious.

Against Constant, for instance, Debord makes two charges, both in many respects perspicacious. The first is that there is a certain strand in Constant which, despite his denials, is close to the utopian legacy of Auguste Comte and Saint-Simon, particularly in the way it privileges an intellectual "class" as bearers of agency for bringing about a new world: "when you find progressive forces only in 'intellectuals who revolt against cultural poverty,' you yourselves are utopians. What can intellectuals do without ties to an enterprise that brings comprehensive change to social relations?"⁴¹ It's a question that, as we shall see, picks up the shared-Marxist-ground tone behind all Situationist activity, but presses it towards thinking Marx in a new way.

The second issue concerns the status of unitary urbanism. Where Constant is focused on the way unitary urbanism realizes and overcomes the more limited achievements of the separate arts, Debord points already to realizing and overcoming unitary urbanism in turn: "Our necessary activity is dominated by the question of the *totality*. Take note of it. Unitary urbanism is not a conception of the totality, and must not become one. It is an operational instrument constructing an extended setting."⁴² While Debord and Constant are allied in their embrace of technicity (against the rather technophobic Jorn), Debord does not think it enough any more to just break down the arts and combine them in the construction of new ambiances, new terrains of play. For Debord unitary urbanism is much less a positive, constructive

41. (Constant 4 April 59).

42. (Constant 4 April 59).

modeling and more a negative and critical tactic for opposing the kind of tower block mentality that characterized postwar reconstruction.

Legend has it that when Debord broke with people he simply cut them dead and moved on. With Constant this is not the case, and for once the correspondence continues on, to the stage of a love gone wrong. “Passion leads you astray”⁴³ writes Debord to Constant, sounding for all the world like Madame de Merteuil in *Dangerous Liaisons*. Playing Valmont, Constant retorts by telegram: “If passion leads me astray, indecision loses you altogether.”⁴⁴ Debord resorts to threats: “it is up to you to choose those grounds.”⁴⁵ At stake are 200 copies of Constant’s book which Debord feels are “owed” to him. It may sound like just a pretext, but one of the essential components of the existence of the SI was the internal exchange of documents and their “donation” to external parties. As this incident highlights, it was held together by the gift.

In the end, the impetuous left of the movement is no better for Debord’s purposes than the *sprezzatura* of the easygoing right. Here, in a couple of sentences addressed to Constant, Debord speaks all at once of a crisis of friendship, of tactics and thought, of moments of decision: “I am sure that, here, we had reached the point where the SI had to make an instant choice (or had to be abandoned). Because you know well that I have always thought that ‘there are moments at which it is necessary to know how to choose.’; that you don’t have to teach me this; and that, if there has been a certain opportunism in the SI, I have been among those (you, too) who have *counterbalanced* it.”⁴⁶

Apart from the failed intellectual romance with Constant, the key relationship within the early SI is

43. (Constant 21 June 60).

44. (Jorn 6 July 60).

45. (Constant 21 June 60).

46. (Constant 2 June 60).

between Debord and Asger Jorn. “Asger has made a lot of progress,” writes an insouciant Debord to his old Letterist comrade Mohamed Dahou shortly after the founding of the SI.⁴⁷ While Debord always has his own agendas, it would be a not implausible reading of the Situationist International to treat it as just a side project for Asger Jorn. Painter, polymath, politician of the spirit, Jorn was also an aesthetician who worked in the medium of the organization long before it was fashionable. Where many had created and destroyed organizations before, it had usually been serial—one after another. Jorn did this too, from the Danish group Hellhorse to COBRA to the Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus to the Situationist International. He would even join the College of Pataphysics around the time he supposedly resigned from the SI.⁴⁸ But he was also the owner of the Danish-French Film Company, the Library of Alexandria, and—best name yet—The Institute for Comparative Vandalism.

After many difficult years, Jorn achieved recognition as a painter in 1957, and success by 1960. His problem was finding things to do with the money. A large part of the answer was this extraordinary series of organizations. As Debord writes to Dahou, “he has provided us with a certain quantity of new (financial) means.”⁴⁹ Indeed it seems as if Jorn’s generosity underwrote not only the SI but some of those who broke with it, right up until his death in 1973. In some of his letters to Jorn, Debord really is a secretary, arranging his meetings when Jorn descends on Paris, paying the bills, handling the suppliers. But there is more to their relationship. While it would be extravagant to say that their friendship was to the twentieth century what that of Marx and Engels was to the nineteenth century, one could imagine the comparison

47. (Dahou 18 Nov 57).

48. Asger Jorn, *Pataphysics, A Religion In The Making*

49. (Dahou 18 Nov 57).

could have occurred to them. (Jorn's intellectual formation owed a lot to Engels; Debord's would pinch quite a bit from Marx.)

While it is well known that Jorn funded the SI, his intellectual contribution has been largely ignored.⁵⁰ He had already been through an extensive period of theoretical development before the formation of the SI.⁵¹ He had already elaborated, for example, a *qualitative* theory of value, quite at odds with most of the post-Marxist lines of thought that were shortly to emerge. The dominant line of thought would replace the concept of value with the concept of the sign, or retreat from questions of the economic infrastructure for the cultural superstructure. Jorn's move is the opposite. He makes value qualitative, and puts the aesthetics of difference squarely at the heart of the economic question. This puts him on a search for the qualitative class, as it were, the agents within the economic sphere of difference, change, transformation.

Jorn's interest in the qualitative aspect of economics led him to the quite original, if quixotic, struggle to come up with a metaphysics of process, change, and poesis.⁵² One prescient attempt at it was his early interest in topology. This was at the time an unfashionable branch of geometry which studied the transformation of one shape into another. To Jorn it was a glimpse of a future *situology*, or theory of qualitative transformation. The *Correspondence* confirms Debord's interest in this work. As he writes to Jorn: "Very interested in the situological and situographical development of topology. It will be necessary to stay rapidly informed of all the scientific conclusions about this—and to adapt or *détourn* them."⁵³ To Constant he writes that topology "is very interesting and could perhaps replace the less firm notion of psycho-geography: the two cover the same domain."⁵⁴ From the

50. Peter Shield, *Comparative Vandalism: Asger Jorn and the artistic attitude to life* (1998).

51. Asger Jorn, *The Natural Order and Other Texts*, Ashgate, London, 2002.

52. Asger Jorn, *The Natural Order and Other Texts*.

53. (Jorn 6 July 60).

54. (Constant 7 Sept 59).

earlier Letterist practice of wandering the streets of Paris (the *dérive*), extracting an embodied knowledge of the ambience of particular zones of the city (*psychogeography*), Jorn attempted to extract a general theory of the subjective and qualitative process (*situology*). This in turn would be the basis for a new practice of collective and transformative action, an aesthetics of process, where art as a canon of distinctions is replaced by a practice of impermanent differentiations. As Debord writes to Jorn: “In the terms taken up by your *Critique [of Political Economy]*, the value of art must no longer be sought in its *distinction* or its permanence.”⁵⁵

The *Correspondence* sets up the beginnings of the SI as a tension between these key figures—Debord, Jorn, Gallizio, Constant, and some minor characters. But certain names are missing. There are no letters in this volume to Michèle Bernstein, who besides being Debord’s partner at the time, was also a founding member of the SI. Nor are there letters to Michèle Mochot-Bréhat, Debord’s lover. Both refused to allow Debord’s second wife Alice Becker-Ho to include them in her selection and arrangement of this volume of the letters. Curiously, the shape of this volume of letters among men was shaped in good measure by four women.

At least part of what is omitted from the *Correspondence* can be found in what Debord calls Michèle Bernstein’s “fake novel” *All the King’s Horses*, and its sequel *La Nuit*.⁵⁶ The novels, which both describe the same events, cover roughly the same period as this volume of the *Correspondence*, and concern the lives of three characters who are not unlike Debord, Bernstein, and Mochot-Bréhat. While usually read to glean biographical tidbits, they are in the present context best thought of as

55. (Jorn 6 July 60).

56. (Straram 10 Oct 60).

companion pieces to the *Correspondence*, offering a theory in novel form about the *détournement* of love, of love as strategy and gift rather than property, which are questions not discussed at all here.⁵⁷

“The SI itself already has a history and also ‘*works for history*.’”⁵⁸ In this compact phrase, Debord encapsulates a double aspect of the SI: that it self-consciously drew on the history of avant-garde movements, but saw the accumulated memory of such movements as raw material for constructing a new kind of historical action. Out of the decomposition of the arts arose the possibility of articulating a generalized capacity for play, love, and poetry that could be made by all. Where the Marxist tradition imagined the seizure of the means of production by the proletariat, the SI conjured up a new proletariat that could *détourn* the whole city as a space of collective play. Making history would be more of a poetics of space than the rational reorganization of labor time.

A not insignificant question for the SI, then, was the way in which previous avant-gardes were to become artifacts of history. “Surrealism presents itself as a total project, concerning a whole way of living. It is this *intention* that constitutes Surrealism’s most progressive aspect, which obliges us to compare ourselves to it, so as to differentiate ourselves (the transition from a utopian revolutionary art to an experimental revolutionary art). Of course, we are still a long way from this transition.”⁵⁹ What mattered, in short, was the unrealized historical project of the avant-gardes, not their theories, their styles, their legacy of works and words. As Debord writes to his old Letterist comrade Patrick Straram: “Poetry, yes, but in life. No return possible to Surrealist or earlier poetic writing.”⁶⁰

There is clearly a Marxist overtone to the prospect of working for history, rather than merely becoming

57. Odile Passot, “Portrait of Guy Debord as a Young Libertine,” in Michèle Bernstein, *All the King’s Horses*. Semio-texte (2008).

58. (Jorn 6 July 60).

59. (Constant 8 Aug 58).

60. (Straram 12 Nov 58).

historical. All of the key members of the SI in this period knew their official Marxist catechism. As late as 1959 Debord makes some strikingly orthodox pronouncements: “I believe that the importance of dialectical materialism, its decisive (but still barely exploited) progress in the history of ideas, is above all the *supremacy of practice*, the notion of *praxis* that *contains and supersedes* theoretical reflection, and which is itself always inseparable from a praxis.”⁶¹

Both the SI’s orthodox Marxist reflexes and its move away from them are in part shaped by the political conjuncture of the time. Initially, Debord has a rather conventional notion of the role an organization can play in defending individual artists or intellectuals from repression. Referring back to a famous scandal in which Letterists seized the pulpit at Notre Dame and announced the death of God, he notes that the “only thing that prevented the police and the church from managing to [lock up our friends for life on the grounds that they were mad] was the protest of artists and intellectuals.”⁶² What changes is the atmosphere of repression surrounding the anticolonial struggles in Algeria. Debord and Bernstein were signatories to the “Manifesto of the 121,” a declaration of support for French soldiers who disobeyed orders in Algeria—an act which probably precipitated police attention to the SI. Debord seems at first rather peeved at being interrogated by the police—“It seems they take us for gangsters!”—even if he manages to preserve the SI with Kafkaesque efficiency: “Not being declared, the SI cannot be officially dissolved ...!”⁶³

From the few clues available, it seems as though the unfolding of the Algerian situation is key to the evolution of Debord’s political thought. Initially, he expects that the French proletariat will intervene in the Algerian

61. (Constant 26 April 59).

62. (Gallizio 16 June 58).

63. (Gallizio 17 July 58).

struggle. In 1958 he is still writing to Gallizio that “nothing is determined, because popular forces still haven’t engaged in an open struggle.”⁶⁴ Debord still believes in the proletariat as the agent of history, even if his conception of its composition and mode of action is still unformed. In 1959 he writes to Constant: “I believe in the possibility, and even in the necessity, of a new beginning for the revolution—and even in Europe, *which isn’t very stable* and is threatened by fascism.”⁶⁵ And in 1960 to Frankin: “the worker’s movement is still absent.”⁶⁶

Debord pays close attention in this period to the intellectuals gathered around the leading independent Marxist journal *Arguments*, and the more marginal post-Trotskyist group *Socialism or Barbarism*. His tone is dismissive. “The ‘thinkers’ of the Left said that everything must be radically rethought, and never has thought been more banal.”⁶⁷ Given that he would later collaborate with *Socialism or Barbarism*, his views on them in 1958 are interesting: “These people are mechanistic to a frightening extent. About as un-Marxist as it is possible to get: workerists. This even runs to religious thinking: the proletariat is their Hidden God. Its ways are mysterious, and the intellectuals must abase themselves and wait. Then how could they admit that the house is on fire?”⁶⁸ He is no less dismissive of the *Arguments* crowd: “A certain unfortunate taste for the authority of the pulpit, it seems to me, explains a good part of their Stalinism and joint revisionism.”⁶⁹ The distaste was perhaps mutual, and as Debord notes, “they expend a lot of effort to surround us with silence.”⁷⁰

Surprisingly, Debord declares the academic Marxist Lucien Goldmann “very important and original.”⁷¹ To Jorn, busy formulating his theories of value, he writes, “if you come to agree with Goldmann’s conceptions,

64. (Gallizio 25 May 58).

65. (Constant 21 March 59).

66. (Frankin 26 Jan 60).

67. (Frankin, 8 Aug 58).

68. (Frankin, 8 Aug 58).

69. (Jorn 2 July 59).

70. (Straram 10 Oct 60).

71. (Jorn, 11 July 59).

this would be very positive, at least for our relationship with the Parisian intelligentsia.”⁷² Goldmann’s study of Pascal and Racine, *The Hidden God*, caused something of a stir when published in 1956.⁷³ Goldmann’s approach, adapted from George Lukács, was to seek out the internal coherence of a literary or philosophical work, which could then be connected to the world view of a class. But where for Lukács only the world view of the proletariat—at once the subject and object of history—could grasp the totality of social relations, for Goldmann all classes could have world views which conceived of the totality in their own way. This severing in Goldmann of the link between proletariat and totality (mediated for Lukács by the Communist Party) is perhaps a key resource for Debord, even if the SI intended in the end to construct a new kind of relation between a reconceived proletariat—one which refuses labor—and a new totality—one more poetic and less “totalitarian.”

For Goldmann, Pascal and Racine hewed to a tragic vision of life, from which God has withdrawn. Rather than accept this disenchanted world, they turn instead to the absolute demand for an unattainable salience, emanating from a hidden God who insists that “a true calling is one devoted to the quest for wholeness and authenticity.”⁷⁴ Goldmann linked this world view to that of *noblesse de robe*, a class in decline and fighting a rear-guard action against the rise of the absolutist state. *The Hidden God*’s significance for Debord is as a work which restates a Marxist world view decoupled from the Communist Party—it was published in the same year as Khrushchev’s famous denunciation of Stalin—but also outside of the Trotskyite formations which claimed to be the true interpreters of the hidden God of the proletariat.

72. (Jorn 11 July 59).

73. See Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality*, University of California Press, 1984, p300ff.

74. Lucien Goldmann, *The Hidden God*, Routledge Keegan Paul, 1964, p38.

Henri Lefebvre was 56 when Debord met him in 1957, via Lefebvre's girlfriend Évelyne Chastel, who knew Michèle Bernstein. Lefebvre was at the time the leading philosopher of the French Communist Party. He left the party in 1959, the year he published *La Somme et le reste*, in which he advanced his theory of *moments*. Lefebvre's "moment" is closely related to Debord's attempt to think through the situation, although as Andy Merrifield says "it is hard to know who influenced whom."⁷⁵ Lefebvre starts from the observation that the leading strategists of advanced capitalism recognized the futility of clinging to colonies such as Algeria and advanced instead a strategy of colonizing everyday life. Formerly outside the sphere of capitalist social relations, everyday life had become a new site of both commodification and its contestation. Out of everyday life, even in its commodified form, crystallize a series of moments—of work, play, love, rest, justice, contestation—each of which presses towards the absolute realization of a specific possibility. The moment is "the absolute at the heart of the relative."⁷⁶

Lefebvre's ambition was a sociology of such forms and of their *plasticity*. He was opposed to a mechanical, determinist version of Marx, but wanted something more sober as an alternative than the magical thinking of his old friends the surrealists. He found, or thought he found, the agents of a new romanticism in the Situationists, whose project was not a sociology but a practice, and not of refining a finite set of existing moments but of constructing new situations. Marx had shown in elaborate detail how the qualitative particulars of concrete labor became the quantifiable substance of abstract labor through the imposition of the wage relation, the commodity form, and the "general equivalent"

75. Andy Merrifield, *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction*, Routledge, London, 2006, p33.

76. Henri Lefebvre, *Key Writings*, p167.

of money. The SI tried to think what one might call the “specific nonequivalent,” and its name was the *situation*. But the very word resisted becoming a concept.

Thinking aloud, Debord tries to specify it in its difference from Lefebvre’s concept of “moment” in *La Somme et le reste*. “The difficulty of the ‘situationist’ moment is on the contrary in marking its exact end (its *reversal*? into another), its transformation into a different term of this series of situations that (can?) constitute such a Lefebvorean moment.”⁷⁷ Here, in this hesitating language, Debord gropes toward an understanding of the Situationist practice of creating collective experiences of space and time that have their own singular coherence but neither collapse back into the dead time of routine nor ossify into mere art artifacts. Unlike the moment, the situation “... must *unify* falsely separated categories (love, play, expression, creative thought). And each of these formations—however conscious and calculated it may be, in the sense of being given over to higher risks—inevitably moves towards its own reversal, because each one is wholly experienced along with its negation and permanent supersession in time.”⁷⁸

When capital expands into everyday life, it subsumes the moments not only of work but also of play, love, and so on, in forms that are commodified or bureaucratic, or both. The situation is the way that everyday life can escape this fate, the gift of an impermanent and mutable topology of forms. The SI’s break with orthodox Marxism included a precocious attempt to produce a theory and practice of qualitative play, in place of quantitative work. From the art world’s avant-gardes it took the question of the qualitative, of difference; from the avant-garde of the proletariat it took the question of collective action. The problem lay in combining them. If in the early days

77. (Frankin 22 Feb 60).

78. (Jorn 2 July 59).

the SI erred on the side of art, with the exclusion of the artists it would tack in the other direction. What passes in between is the still unrealized possibility of thinking through both together. As Debord writes to Walter Korun: “you propose to make art the very yardstick of the economy, *without indicating the transition between the artistic commodity-object of today and the free experimental activity in a new dimension of culture (the construction of temporary environments) to which right now the term ‘situationist’ might possibly be applied.*”⁷⁹

It may seem quixotic to talk, in the twenty-first century, about Marx, and certainly much now escapes the contemporary reader not only about the collective practices of the SI but also its theoretical obsessions. But perhaps there is something to be said for a Marxism, the memory of which one cannot abandon, just as one cannot abandon the memory of a certain lover, or of one’s hometown. But one lives on. In place of that memory of Marxism, the memory of the Situationists. In place of the memory of that lover, the memory of a subsequent one. In place of the home town, an adopted city. The act of solidarity outlives that with which it stands. Not the least virtue of speaking at length about a Situationist Marxism is that it is a bulwark against the collapse of the SI’s legacy into art history, even Marxist art history. As Debord writes, “‘nothing has ever interested me beyond a certain practice of life.’ (It is precisely this that kept me from being an artist, in the current sense of the word and, I hope, a theoretician of aesthetics!)”⁸⁰

Debord’s confidence in the legacy of the SI vacillated somewhat. At its most optimistic, “we have published several texts (including yours) that in thirty years will still be the basis for the creative movement that will not fail to constitute itself.”⁸¹ To the more pessimistic: “we

79. (Korun 16 June 58).

80. (Constant 26 April 59).

81. (Constant 7 Sept 59).

have chosen a path by which we will only have significance in 10 or 15 years.”⁸² More than a half century after its founding, even the thirty-year estimate seems modest. The SI just refuses to go away. Perhaps it is because it speaks for a hidden God whose promise is now in the past. Perhaps we would like to think that the dead are safe, that even in this era of disenchantment, we still have a line back to another possible world, even if it lies along a historical path not only not-taken, but which had never even existed.

82. (Wyckaert 1 Oct 60).

Foreword

The letters that Guy Debord retained copies of will appear in several volumes under the title *Correspondence*.

Other letters that have generously been sent to us, whether by those who received them or who have rights to them, or by the institutions to which they were given for conservation, complete the correspondence.

Some refusals due to persisting disagreements, more or less justified vague reluctance, destruction, but also naturally the pure and simple loss of this type of writing, deprive us in some cases forever of letters whose number cannot *a priori* be evaluated.¹ This loss is particularly tangible when it concerns the earliest years, those that begin this publication.

We have therefore decided to include in this first volume Guy Debord's letters ranging from the foundation of the Situationist International at the first conference in Cosia d'Arroscia, Italy in July 1957, through the fourth conference held in London in September 1960.

All the letters pertaining to the preceding period (the era of the Lettrist International) will be gathered in the final volume, accompanied by any other letters we receive in the meantime.

To aid comprehension, short notes will be brought to bear—when the need for them is felt and to the extent of our own understanding—which will set facts

and individuals within their historical context. A chronological list of significant events precedes each year.

This wide-ranging correspondence is rich in information as to the personality and the active role that Guy Debord assumed during these forty years,² and thus assumes its place in the complete works of its author. It may provide a different set of bearings for the ever-increasing number of biographers eager to draw hasty conclusions on the basis of all manner of legends which have certainly swirled around somebody for whom people have taken particular pleasure in forging a notorious *bad reputation*.

Alice Debord

1. Forthcoming volumes in this series will bear witness to the fact that, apart from specific letters of insults, Guy Debord always adopted a friendly tone toward his correspondents, a tone that some came to take advantage of. The latter nevertheless know that a sudden and complete cessation—often devoid of the slightest explanation—signalled the end of a relationship the real reasons for whose end many have preferred to keep shrouded in mystery.

2. Guy Debord was 25 in 1957.

1957

1957

June

Guy Debord, *Report on the Construction of Situations and on the Terms of Organization and Action of the International Situationist Tendency*, Paris. The back cover states: "This report, presented to the members of the Lettrist International, the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, and the London Psychogeographical Committee as the basis for internal discussions among these organizations and as a document for their propaganda, cannot under any circumstances be for sale."

—Asger Jorn, *Contre le fonctionnalisme*, Paris.

—Show by Arnal and Jorn at the Galerie Rive Gauche in Paris; with a catalogue introduction, "*Peintures de Jorn*," by Jacques Prévert.

July

27–28—Foundation of the Situationist International (SI) at a conference in Cosio d'Arroscia, Italy. Participants: Michèle Bernstein, Guy-Ernest Debord (Lettrist International), Giuseppe Pinot Gallizio, Asger Jorn, Walter Olmo, Piero Simondo, Elena Verrone (International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus), Ralph Rumney (London Psychogeographical Committee). "July 28th, the Cosio d'Arroscia conference was concluded with the decision to completely merge the represented groups ... and with the constitution—voted by 5 against 1, and 2 abstentions—of a Situationist International on the basis defined by the meeting's preliminary publications." (*Potlatch* n° 29)

September

Guy Debord begins work on the book *Mémoires*, “entirely composed of prefabricated elements.”

October

15—*Remarques sur le concept d’art expérimental*, by G.-E. Debord (Critique of a text by Walter Olmo, from the Italian section of the SI, *Pour un concept d’expérimentation musicale*.)

November

5—*Potlatch* n° 29, informational bulletin of the Situationist International, Paris.

To Pinot Gallizio¹

[16 June]

Fotografia, nel 1957, della futura "Piazza Gallizio" di Parigi.

Photograph, in 1957, of the future "Gallizio Square" in Paris.

A postcard representing the Place de l'Opéra in Paris; the word *Opéra* crossed out.

1. Giuseppe ("Pinot") Gallizio: chemist, anthropologist, and painter. Met the Danish painter Asger Jorn in 1955. Member of the MIBI, the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, founded in 1953 by Jorn in Villars, Switzerland, in reaction against Max Bill's Bauhaus and Hochschule für Gestaltung at Ulm. 29 September 1955, Gallizio, Jorn, and Piero Simondo, a painter-ceramicist from Turin, formed the "First Laboratory for Imaginist Experiments" in Gallizio's laboratory in Alba.

To Gallizio

Paris, 19 June 1957

Dear Pinot,

I understood your letter very well, but I should write to you in French.

I had only just returned to Paris on the day that we sent you the card depicting the still-unfinished Gallizio Square.

Asger had returned to Albisola before my arrival. Elena¹ and Piero should now be in Cosio d'Arroscia.² Rumney³ will arrive in Paris very shortly.

I will send the photographs that you passed on to me, in order to make copies in Copenhagen, as soon as I have a short explanatory letter for the printer doing our monographs translated into English.⁴

1. Elena Verrone, Piero Simon-do's companion.

2. Cosio d'Arroscia: a small village in the Piedmont region of Italy, the family home of Simondo, where the first conference of the Situationist International (SI) would be held on July 27th and 28th.

3. Ralph Rumney, an English painter, founder of the Psychogeographical Committee of London.

4. See the following letter.

5. Walter Olmo, member of the MIBI active in experimental sound and music.

6. A device invented by Professor Cocito in Turin, which emits different wave lengths according to one's distance from the device.

7. The Imaginist Bauhaus.

8. Referring to the *Report on the Construction of Situations*, which will serve as the basis for discussion at the conference in Cosio d'Arroscia.

9. The Alba Congress, organized by Jorn and Gallizio on behalf of the MIBI in September 1956, brought together representatives of avant-gardist factions from eight nations to lay the foundations for a unified organization.

I am going to translate your text on Baroque color, which seems excellent to me, into French.

Remind Olmo⁵ that I will translate his theoretical writing on music, if it is finished, once he sends it to me.

The construction of the *Tereminofono*⁶ is indeed wonderful news. All my congratulations.

In a few days I can send you the journals you requested for the Bauhaus⁷ archives—together with copies of my latest piece of analysis and propaganda for the movement.⁸ You should distribute copies to friends as you see fit.

I think a general publication on the work of the Laboratory, like that for the Alba Congress proceedings,⁹ should be produced as a large illustrated book, which is very expensive. We will do that later.

I hope that we will see one another again soon. Our best wishes for all our friends in Alba.

Guy

To Heimbürger¹

[End of June]

Dear Mr. Heimbürger,²

I'm sending you new photos to format to the same dimensions (in the same proportion) as the previous ones. The proofs of the photos marked with the names of Gallizio and Simondo should be sent to *Selandia Bogtrykkiri*.³ The proofs of the photos which are in the third envelope should be sent to me in Paris along with those I sent you at the end of May.

1. A Danish photoengraver.

2. This is a new translation of a letter originally sent in English translation.

3. *Selandia Printers*.

Asger Jorn⁴ is in Italy until October, 6 via Isola, Albisola Mare (Savona).

With fondest regards,

G.-E. Debord

4. Asger Jørgensen, Danish painter, who assumed the name Jorn in 1945, co-founder of Cobra (1948–1951) and the MIBI (1953–1957). With Gallizio, in September 1956, he held the 1st World Congress of Free Artists in Alba, from which the SI emerged in July 1957. Jorn was one of the founding members of the SI.

To Simondo

Thursday, July 11th

Dear Piero,

I received news from Asger and Gallizio—and the mock-up of Gallizio's monograph. Asger mentioned a biographical note from you that I should correct and send to Copenhagen. But I have not yet received it.

We will arrive in Cosio Monday July 22, in the afternoon, I think.

Do write to me before then—what is the weather (and the temperature) like in Cosio at the moment, i.e. what sort of clothes should we bring?

Best Wishes to Elena and you.

Guy

To Simondo

Wednesday, July 17th

Dear Piero,

Because of the overcrowded trains, we'll be arriving a day late; which is to say we won't be in Cosio until Tuesday the 23rd, probably late afternoon.

Regards,

Guy

Written on the back of a piece of paper indicating the presence of explosive materials.

To the Simondos

Cannes, Saturday [August 3rd]

Dear Elena and Piero,

I understand that my famous proofs¹ are en route to Cannes, so I will wait here for them until the middle of next week.

I really miss your company, and also somewhat that of the Australian from Scandinavia.

A phone conversation with Paris assures me that Asger's opening² went without demonstrations or violence. Not even a fire. Trocchi³ was found: he is still in America, but has written to reaffirm his fidelity to our cause. Rumney on the other hand, from what I heard, has not passed through Paris, and has written a letter from London to apologize for it. As soon as I return I will summon him to France; or at least order him to act

1. The translations of *Report on the Construction of Situations* and the texts intended for the next issue of *Eristica*.

2. At the Galerie Rive Gauche.

3. Alexander Trocchi joined the Lettrist International in October 1955 after resigning his position as editor-in-chief of the Anglo-American avant-garde journal *Merlin*; an English Situationist belonging to no section.

concretely for us. We don't need capricious allies. Planning is the order of the day, isn't it?

Asger leaves this evening for Italy, I think. Tell him that the *Roue de la Fortune*⁴ has been sent to Copenhagen.

Thanks again for the pleasant meeting. See you soon.

Yours,

Guy

4. Asger Jorn, *La Roue de la Fortune: Méthodologie des cultes* (Copenhagen, 1957).

To the Simondos

Monday Morning [August 12th]

Dear Elena and Piero,

I finally arrived yesterday evening, with several lire and some francs still unused. *Ma fù un vero cimento*.¹ The night spent in Culoz was the most amusing, first in a truckers' bar, then in a public garden where I had to kill eleven mosquitoes.

We have everything we want here, save for the *cosiate*² and intelligent people. I will stay for the time agreed upon so as to begin forthwith my hefty share of the work that we have divided amongst one another.

Naturally, I have yet to have any news from anyone, and I can only tell you that I escaped the perils of the journey as I did the *carabinieri*. Thanks again for the stay, for me it was unforgettable.

See you soon.

Guy

1. "But this was a real test."

2. A light wine from Cosio.

To Simondo

22 August 57

Dear Piero,

Your letter of August 15th reached me this morning in Paris, after forwarded via Evian and Switzerland.

In regard to the remarks you passed on to me, I actually think that the questions we need to advance here can be linked to the notion of spectacle-participation, to an intervention in an ambiance. It is in this connection that we would need to find a possible title. I will propose this when Asger and Ralph return. We obviously need a precise determination of *domains*, but we are opposed to individual specialization. *A fortiori*, then, we must be careful not to fall into a kind of specialization based on nationality (the English concerning themselves with psychogeography, the Italians with architecture . . . , etc.) which would hardly be convenient and could moreover look ridiculous.

The main point to emphasize is that *situationism*, as a body of doctrine, does not exist and must not exist. What exists is a *Situationist* experimental attitude, defined *organizationally* (precisely in the form of an international Association). In my *Report*, I only used the word “situationism” once—in quotes—to denounce it in advance as one of the stupidities that our adversaries will naturally use in opposition to us (page 18, last paragraph).¹

To my knowledge, this term has never been used elsewhere (neither in writing, nor verbally), by any of us. You are the first to pose its existence in your last letter. Happily, it was to oppose it!

I know nothing of what is happening in Venice. No news from Italy, aside from greetings from Asger, Pinot,

1. Guy Debord, *Report on the Construction of Situations in Situationist International Anthology*, edited and translated by Ken Knabb (Berkeley, CA, 2nd ed., 2006), p. 42.

and Ralph, on a postcard from Venice at the beginning of August.

The most urgent problem is the preparation of *Eristica*,² at least the editorial portion for which we have taken responsibility. If a delay occurs, I would rather it did not come from our work.

1) I would like to receive the texts from Cosio as quickly as possible.

2) I am writing to Asger today about the illustrations. I have very few usable negatives for the issue. Where are the others? Do you have any news about the monographs? The electrotyper tells me he sent the additional negatives to your printer.

I am still waiting for proofs to correct.

Best wishes to you and Elena—from Michèle as well.³

Guy

2. *Eristica*, the information bulletin for the MIBI (The title of *Eristika* refers to Socrates and the Sophists opposed to *Dialektika*.)

3. Michèle Bernstein, Debord's first wife, a member of the Lettrist International and the Situationist International.

To Jorn

Paris, 22 August 57

Dear Asger,

Thanks for the copies of *Fin de Copenhague*.¹ They are in two bookstores. I have to ask for information on the two following points:

1) Have you any photographic images that might be used to illustrate the next *Eristica*? The ones that I had Heimbürger make were intended as illustrations for future tracts, and almost none of them are suitable for the journal.

1. An effort at *détourné* writing produced in twenty-four hours in Copenhagen by Jorn and Debord. Printed in May 1957.

2. The Lettrists suppressed the religious aspects ("Saint") in Parisian place names (see "En attendant la fermeture des églises" *Potlatch* n° 9–10–11 [August 17–31, 1954]).

3. At the bar *Le Tonneau d'Or*, 32 rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève, which served as the official address of the Lettrist International and then of the Situationist International. Its owner admitted or barred strangers on his own, often felicitous, authority. In 1954, Asger Jorn, who "had gone down a treat," was encouraged to wait for a first meeting with the Lettrists for an entire afternoon. Since no one stopped in that day, he had to resort to writing.

Do you have any photographs from the Alba congress?
As a general rule send all images to Gallizio, and send me *proofs* of the images that I can use in the mock-up of the journal.

2) Did you receive the copies of your photo and mine, also given to Heimbürger? I know that they were done because I received a proof of the copy of my photo, but not the photo itself. If you don't have it, would you write to Heimbürger to tell him to send it to me in Paris?

3) Can you send me a translation of the attached text? It seems to be a manifesto for a Swiss-German avant-garde group, a member of which came to the rue de la Montagne-Geneviève² to make contact with us, naturally without being able to connect.³ I don't know if it is necessary to respond to them without having understood their text.

Warmly,

Guy

To Dahou,

23 August 57

Dear Midhou,¹

I was very pleased to hear about you from [H]afid,² who showed me your letter yesterday.

Alex³ sent a postcard six weeks ago to say that he was going to spend a little more time in America but that, even if he doesn't write, we should remain sure he is our friend.

1. Mohamed Dahou, a member of the Lettrist International and then of the Algerian section of the Situationist International.

2. Abdelhafid Khatib, a member of the Lettrist International, then of the Algerian section of the Situationist International.

3. Alexander Trocchi.

We've seen Charly (Haetcher) several times. Neither Iris or the other Americans have tried to return to rue Campagne-Première again.⁴

The group is growing (though about six months ago we had to turn against Gil⁵ who started acting like he had in 54 and 55 again).

We have published several little books.⁶ I have sent you nothing because I was not sure how to connect with you, [H]afid now tells me that several letters and cards have been lost. If you want these publications now, should we send them to you?

I just returned from Italy where almost everyone gathered. You were a celebrity there because of Asger and Ralph,⁷ an Englishman who got to know us a little at Moineau's.⁸ I hope to have a response from you soon, and even more to see you back here shortly.

Very warmly to you. Give Marcelle our best.

Guy

To Jorn

1 September 57

Dear Asger,

Thanks for the letter and the proofs of the negatives. I agree with you that we should present the "Cosio conference" as a point of departure for our distinct organized

4. The apartment Trocchi left vacant.

5. Gil J Wolman, the director of the admirable *Anticoncept* (September 1951), a film projected on a balloon, banned by the censor, wherein the visual rhythms were "provoked by the alternation of light and darkness, circumscribed in a circle." Wolman was cofounder of the Lettrist International in 1952, which he represented at the Alba Congress in September 1956. He was excluded from the Lettrist International on January 13th, 1957.

6. Jorn and Debord, *Fin de Copenhague*; Debord, *Psychogeographical Guide to Paris*; Jorn, *Guldhorn og lykkehjul* ("The Methodology of Cults"), with a preface by P.V. Glob; Jorn, *Against Functionalism*.

7. Ralph Rumney.

8. A little bar on the rue du Four in Saint-Germain-des-Prés (now closed) where the Lettrists drank. The Dutch photographer Ed Van Der Elsken immortalized it in *Love on the Left Bank* (1957).

activity and, from now on, move quickly (a new legend must be created immediately around us). When you and Ralph have returned to Paris, we need to conceive of two or three little simultaneous operations—tracts, etc.—to make our latest position known in France. I will write a note on the meeting in Cosio—for *Eristica*, and also for the next *Potlatch*,¹ which will permit the “lettrist” heritage to be officially bequeathed to the new movement.

Great for Cardazzo.² I hope that you can easily arrange things without him.

So the Swiss are idiots. I suspect as much: not a minute to waste on them.

Will Walter Korun³ be in Paris?

After the *Fin de Copenhague* experiment, I gathered a great number of elements to construct the story I’ve been telling you about.⁴ I’ll ask you for some colored lines complex enough that they can form the “load-bearing structure,” as they say in architecture. If Permild⁵ is ready for a much greater shock, it will work out well.

I’ve also gathered some citations for an article on the prospects held out by automation, an article that we should, I think, write together.⁶

I have no news from Simondo, other than a letter that he sent me August 15th that contained no specific news. I wrote back and asked him to rush sending the manuscripts for our next journal. I have not yet received anything.

The work advances with “Charme et mécanique.”⁷ It will be done by the time you arrive.

Pinot also wrote to tell me that the scandal in Venice was grandiose.⁸

Ralph should be in London right now and I am waiting for him to pass through here in three or four days, before he leaves again for Italy. He has a lot of very good ideas, which he told me about in his last letter.

1. *Potlatch*, the informational bulletin for the Lettrist International, n° 29 of which is being discussed here. It was published 5 November 1957.

2. Carlo Cardozzo, a wealthy Milanese art dealer, director of Del Naviglio gallery.

3. Walter Korun, real name Pieter De Groof, member of the MIBI, and of the Belgian section of the Situationist International.

4. Debord’s *Mémoires*.

5. Verner Permild, the Danish printer (Permild & Rosengreen) who did *Fin de Copenhague*.

6. “Les situationnistes et l’automation” appeared in *Internationale Situationniste* n° 1, signed only by Jorn.

7. A text by Jorn on the role of vandalism in the history of the arts; it would appear in *Pour la forme* in September 1958.

8. In Peggy Guggenheim’s museum. Her daughter, Pegeen, married Ralph Rumney.

I heard from Dahou, who is on his way back. This could be useful for certain aspects of propaganda.

See you soon. Warmly

Guy

A Pinot Gallizio

2 September 57

Dear Pinot,

Thanks for your letter and the *pitture-mosche*,¹ which has great formal beauty.

I forgot to reassure you, but *La Grande Paura*² has in fact reached my largest wall; and is its most beautiful ornament. What's more, if they had taken it from me at the border, I would have shaken Europe with my cries of indignation and suffering. It even seems that your oeuvre has passed through customs without being seen, as Michèle was put in a compartment of builders, where everyone drank a lot—such that the customs officials, greeted with jeers and singing, checked nothing.

Yes, Asger told me about the “rivoluzione di Venezia.”³

Peggy Guggenheim probably hasn't been scandalized since 1925.

I have also heard from Ralph—really from everyone but Piero—who still hasn't sent me the texts (on this topic, can you remind Walter Olmo that I am expecting his article?).

1. “Fly paintings.” An allusion to a stock of flies rendered resistant following a “crusade of purification” by DDT launched by the Americans in Italy in 1945.

2. *The Great Fear*, a painting by Gallizio (1956).

3. *The Venice revolution*: the scandal at Peggy Guggenheim's where her daughter Pegeen and Ralph Rumney set about destroying paintings.

The “District of Flies” will be very pretty. Can it be tried in Alba? We could start modestly, for example with just the via Giacosa, by depositing the slaughtered animals all along it. This will be great publicity for Bruno’s cuisine.

I am going to look at the mock-up for a “Monument raised on behalf of Pinot Gallizio by grateful flies.”

Michèle sends her regards. My best to your wife. Ciao

Guy

*LE MOSCHE AL GOVERNAMENTO*⁴

4. (sic) “Government flies.”

BANDIERA-MOSCA

5. “The Fly Flag will triumph.”

*TRIONFERÀ*⁵

To Jorn

1. In Amsterdam.

9 September

2. The Cobra movement, founded in Paris November 8th, 1948, by Appel, Constant, Corneille, Jorn, and the writers Dotremont and Noiret, in reaction against the political and aesthetic tendencies of socialist realism on one hand and French Surrealism on the other, was dissolved in 1951.

3. Those who, apart from Constant and Jorn, now enrolled in the SI, wanted to prolong the finished movement.

4. Jørgen Nash, the younger brother of Asger Jorn, of the Danish abstract-Surrealist group, will join the Scandinavian section of the SI in 1960.

Dear Asger,

I think that you are absolutely right about the Cobra exhibition¹: we should try to use Cobra’s² success by presenting ourselves as the necessary transcendence of that era. Or at least fight strongly against neo-Cobra.³

Jørgen Nash’s story is beautiful.⁴

You can send me the proofs for Selandia, indicating the *maximum length* that the texts can be, and I will make the corrections and necessary cuts.

I have not yet seen Ralph. I think that he is still in London.

But I am very surprised not to have received *any* Cosio texts, though all the texts were promised to me by

September 1st at the very latest. (Under these conditions I have to finish the mock-up of the journal⁵ September 15th ...)

Neither have I received a letter of explanation for this delay.

When are you coming back to Paris? I hope to see you soon.

Warmly

Guy 5. *Eristica*.

To Jorn

19 September 57

Dear Asger,

Today I received a letter from Simondo who tells me that the translations are finished and that I will soon receive all the texts that have not yet been typed up.

Given the considerable delay, I think that *Eristica* cannot be printed according the previous plan; I don't know if Ralph is still in London, or in Venice, but he will certainly no longer be in Italy in October.

This detail aside, things seem to be going very well. I think there is a lot to do here before the end of the year.

I've taken advantage of the free time for "Charme et mécanique," which is now finished, in *two copies*.

1) Would you like me to send you the first? But I thought you wanted to print it in Paris?

2) Should I send the second copy immediately to Simondo? I only promised it to him by October 15th,

and I fear that this additional work will only further delay our planning from the Italian side.

Warmly,

Guy

To Dahou

19 September 57

Dear Midhou,

Thanks for your letter. Alex wrote from Hollywood that he hopes to return to Paris if he obtains the money for a boat trip, but first he must cross the United States by car and I'm trying to get him a copy of his French driver's license. He said to tell you that in America, even without work, one can always find something to eat and drink, but money to come back on only with great difficulty.

For the publications, with what you said to me in mind—I already thought so—I will let you read them when you get back.

I hope you have done a lot of paintings, and are preparing a sensational show for us.

Warmly,

Guy

To Trocchi

21 September 57

Dear Alex,

I received your letter this morning, and I was able to get the driver's license immediately. I hope that it will make your return happen more quickly.

Midhou is in Algeria: he had to go when his father died. He just wrote me that he thinks he won't return until the end of the year. He sends you his best wishes.

Things are getting worse in France every day, and the prospects are worrying. But things with the International are developing nicely: it became "Situationist" after a meeting this summer in Italy. I am also sending you a brochure that I had sent to you in New York.

All the same, we're enjoying ourselves. I am counting on you to have two or three little revolutions in preparation.

See you soon,

Guy

To Jorn

24 September 57

Dear Asger,

I too believe that we should establish a new plan for our editorial activity in Paris, and carry it out as quickly as

1. Walter Gropius, German architect, founder of the Bauhaus (Weimar, 1919). Herbert Read, art critic, will replace Lawrence Alloway as director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA). Ulm, the “new Bauhaus.”

possible before the Gropius-Read-Ulm¹ meeting, which could be sensational. All the circumstances are in our favor. The principle danger for us, right now, is delay.

I’m expecting you on October 10. Let me know when you arrive.

Yours,

Guy

To Rumney

24 September 57

Dear Ralph,

Apart from all the financial problems, the publication of *Eristica* cannot be anticipated at the moment because of the Italians’ failure to carry out the editorial work they were responsible for.

When will you be in Paris? Asger is arriving October 10. Here, some beautiful *dérives* [drifts].¹

Yours,

Guy

1. “Big cities are favorable for the distraction that we call the *dérive*. The *dérive* is a technique of aimless displacement. It is based on the influence of the setting.” *Potlatch* n° 14 (30 November 1954).

To Olmo

Paris, 27 September 1957

Dear Friend,

I only received the article on music the day before yesterday, September 25th—and you're announcing other works by Piero in "about ten days." I will devote myself to their translation. But I remind you that according to the plan that we agreed upon in Cosio *all* the texts were to arrive here by September 1st at the latest, and that *Eristica* was to be printed, partly in Venice (for the French texts), and partly in Alba, between September 15th and 30th!

I informed Asger and Ralph—who have taken over responsibility for the issue—of the missing texts. I don't know at what point in the future they will get back to this matter.

Aside from this delay, everything is fine.

Warmly,

G.-E. Debord

To Jorn

[12 October]

Dear Asger,

It seems that you have taken the sheet of proofs that I was to correct? Whatever the case, you should give me one of them when you come by my place, Monday or Tuesday.

Warmly,

Guy

“Inquire me first what Danskers are in Paris; And how, and who, what means, and where they keep, What company, at what expense.”¹

1. Fragment of text cut and pasted to the back of the envelope.

To Olmo

18 October 1957

Dear Walter,

Here is the translation of your text,¹ and the criticism that it unfortunately demanded.

To avoid confusion as much as possible, let me clarify:

1) Your practical work in music interests me, not for a transcendent quality it offers you, but because of the most advanced developments that you certainly attain in continuing it.

2) You yourself, to the slight extent that such considerations matter to us, appeal to me.

1. *For a Concept of Musical Experimentation*, presented in September 1957 and approved by the Italian section, with the exception of Gallizio and his son, Giors Melanotte. Debord developed his criticism in *Remarks on the Concept of Experimenal Art*, an internal document dated 15 October 1957, of which 17 copies were made.

3) I absolutely reject the general “theoretical” ideas of this text, which are not linked to your work in music, and which do not even come from you personally.

4) I obviously do not reproach you, in a general way, for submitting to influences or accepting the ideas of someone else. I reproach you for having accepted, in this particular circumstance, several ideas that are stupid.

Yours,

Guy

To Rumney

15 November

Dear Ralph,

Thanks for the negatives from Cosio. Our work advances without too much fatigue. Walter Korun and another Belgian¹ are marching with us. Poor Baj² is in Paris but, in the end, it turned out that he did not print Asger's signature,³ which saved him from the Arab reception we had planned.⁴ Unfortunately, I did not have the text of *The End of the Avant-Garde* to publish in the recent *Potlatch*, but it seems that the note made on this matter has already had a certain effect: two of those signing now disavow the antistyle. Ciao,

1. Maurice Wyckaert, painter, Situationist in the Belgian section.

2. Enrico Baj, co-founder with Sergio Dangelo of the *Movimento Arte Nucleare*, then with Jorn of the MIBI, excluded in September 1956 from the Alba Congress which consecrated the break with the following notice: “Despairing over certain facts, Baj left the congress. He did not steal the register.”

3. At the bottom of the *Movimento Arte Nucleare* manifesto, *Against Style*, see *Potlatch* n° 29 (5 November 1957).

4. “Debord's Arabs,” much invoked, have become legendary.

Guy

To Dahou

18 November 57

Dear Midhou,

I was very happy to receive your last letter and I approve of your projects for the near future.

Here, one can say that what we can call the group's theoretical-artistic activities are going well, as are personal circumstances (health, flings, everyone is more or less well fed and housed). Everything else is lamentable, as reading *France-Soir* will tell you.

Three months ago, with survivors of the Bauhaus, we founded a "Situationist" International, completely aligned with the newest positions we have taken these last few years (consequently, there has been no shortage of scandal and splits on the Italian side). Asger has made a lot of progress, I think, even with some moments of partial retreat from time to time. But his adherence to the group has created an effect pretty similar to Alex's split from *Merlin* in 55. Only Asger has moved more slowly, but on a much broader (we can say European) scale, and he has provided us with a certain quantity of new (financial) means which seem to be developing well. We have also traveled a lot this year. At least 4 Italians remain with us but 2 of them are clearly suspect: they are at this moment in a minority position, rejected by everyone and I don't know what conclusions they will soon need to draw. We have two very able Belgians, but not from Mariën's group.¹ A single reliable Englishman, at present; the others are still at the stage of very confused sympathy. Even then, ours is no longer in London. This winter he is working in Venice, doing a complete

1. Marcel Mariën, founder in April 1954 of the journal *Les Lèvres nues*, published in Brussels, to which Guy Debord contributed from September 1955 to November 1956 (see *Les Lèvres nues* nos 6, 7, 8, and 9).

psychogeographical study. He also lives with the daughter of Peggy Guggenheim, Pegeen, whom you must have met. Alex's return at this moment would be nice from every point of view, but I have had no news from him since I sent his driver's license to him in Hollywood so he could cross the U.S.A. by car and board a boat in New York, as I wrote to you earlier. Hafid is still fairly inactive but he has finally laid a hand on an utterly charming young marsupial.² He has also done a good translation job.

Eugene, the American who was reading Joyce, passed through the area and was looking for you. Since he was going to Tunisia and hoped to continue on to Algeria, Hafid gave him your current address. To avoid any risk of you getting forgotten here, I dedicated my latest significant article³ to you, eight days ago.

You are greatly missed. Very affectionately to Marcelle and you,

Guy

2. A concept—always in the masculine—invented by Ivan Chtcheglov to designate an “antiwoman,” passed into the jargon of some knowing Situationists: “She is ugly and beautiful. She is like everything we love today.”

3. “One More Try If You Want To Be Situationists (The SI *In* and *Against Decomposition*)” in *Potlatch* n° 29.

To Gallizio

Saturday 23 November

Dear Pinot,

Thank you for your letter (and the photos, which are very beautiful). We have always been sure you were strongly opposed to the metaphysics whose dogmas Simondo is now revealing. The sabotage in Cosio of the latest issue of *Eristica* (for which the stupid text from Olmo was the *only*

one sent to us—at the end of September—though *all* of the promised articles and translations should have come to me by September 1st at the latest so I could resend them to you in Alba and Ralph in Venice by September 15th) and this method of abruptly revealing a completely reactionary thought result from fear of the concrete developments of our work. There is a tendency to remain on a level of a *discourse on experience*, when one feels powerless about other things. Olmo meanwhile seems to me to have a real capacity for experimentation, but on an ideological level he is the victim of his naïveté. Hopefully in the future he will know how to renounce these false received ideas and pursue his true work. You will undoubtedly see him soon in Alba. We leave the matter of judging his case up to you.

Asger spoke to me of the events you told him about in your last letter. Here is our opinion on the most urgent points:

1) Your address should remain the *only address* of the International in Italy.

2) No other painting or document belonging to the Experimental Laboratory can be reclaimed by Simondo (or Olmo) under any pretext whatsoever—and certainly not under the pretext of a publication (of *Eristica* or something else). *We can no longer have anything in common with publications that Simondo now controls.* Our next publications will be decided by the majority of our comrades: we foresee a journal edited in Paris toward the beginning of 1958.

3) Any publication of a journal, tract, or even simple letterhead mentioning a “Cosio Bauhaus” will result in our immediate and *definitive* split with all participants in that enterprise. Let us know as quickly as possible of any documents that should come to your attention along these lines.

Asger is trying to organize an exhibition for you in Paris. In my opinion, it is necessary to exhibit the most extreme research, of which you have spoken to me, to make an impact. *La Gran' Paura* has a multitude of enthusiastic admirers and so far, two visitors have declared that the spectacle made them sick.

Italy aside, our activities are advancing well. Asger believes he can successfully take advantage of the Cobra exhibition in Amsterdam in a decisive manner. Two interesting Belgians joined us. The Bauhaus in Ulm is beginning to give in: Max Bill congratulated Asger on *Fin de Copenhague*. Ralph is arranging a series of lectures in London, around March. If you have an exhibition in Paris, we could put out your monograph at the same time. I have received some interesting negatives for the baroque¹ from Denmark. If you come here do bring any useful printed matter and negatives.

See you soon, I hope. Everyone sends their regards.

Guy

1. *Tecnica dei colori nel barocco (brut-dry)*. See the letter from 19 June 1957.

To Gallizio

27 December 57

Dear Pinot,

I am sorry I was unable to respond to you more quickly: I was traveling. Jorn should already have written you about Pistoï¹: he agrees. He is really sorry about your useless trip to Albisola. He asked me to send you his apologies. When you're able to return to Albisola,

1. Luciano Pistoï, Milanese art dealer, director of the journal *Notizie*.

2. Constant Nieuwenhuys, known as Constant, Dutch painter, founder with Corneille and Appel of the Dutch Experimental Group (*Reflex*), then in 1948, with Jorn and Dotremont, of Cobra. In 1956, he joined the MIBI, then in 1957, the SI.

you will find that the man has been told to let you take the painting. Jorn is in Munich right now for a few days.

The Amsterdam shows are auspicious. I saw Constant,² who will be with us then. Do you have any news from Cosio?

Our sincerest best wishes for 1958 to you and your wife.

Guy

To Constant

27 December 1957

Merry Christmas!

Do you have something to publish in the journal we are preparing?

See you soon,

Guy

To Rumney

[27 December]

Dear Ralph,

We are preparing to print the journal. You should send at least a few already written pages of *Psychogeographical Venice* quickly, so that you appear in this first issue.

I saw Constant recently. He is satisfied with how things have developed over the past year. He will be with us again for the psychogeographical shows in Amsterdam.

Gallizio is bravely fighting the Italo-experimentalists, who appear to be thunderstruck.

Sincerely,

Guy

To the Belgian Section

[December 1957–January 1958]

Dear Friends,

I am busy preparing the first issue of the journal that we discussed together. Would you send some texts? What subjects will you discuss?

We would need this as soon as possible.

I saw Constant a month ago. He approves of our current line and will be with us in Amsterdam. In regard to this activity, Jorn tells me the collapse of the Neo-Cobra positions—which gets worse every week—will allow us to impose Korun as secretary of the “Cobra” exhibition proper, with another one of us secretary for the parallel Situationist exhibition. I find all of this very good, but I don’t know if our adversaries will allow this degree of infiltration.

I hope we see one another soon.

Regards,

G.-E. Debord

1958

1958

January

1st—*Nervenruh! Keine Experimente!* (Be Calm! Don't Experiment!), first manifesto of the German section of the SI, signed by Asger Jorn and Hans Platschek, Munich.

25–26—Second SI conference in Paris. Participants: Michèle Bernstein, Guy-Ernest Debord, Asger Jorn, Adelhafid Khatib, Giuseppe Pinot Gallizio. Expulsions of Walter Olmo, Piero Simondo, and Elena Verrone from the Italian section.

—*Aux producteurs de l'art moderne*, “filiform tract” from the French section.

—*Nouveau Théâtre d'opérations dans la culture*, tract from the French section.

March

15 March–5 April—Jorn show at Galerie Rive Gauche, Paris.

April

4—Expulsion of Ralph Rumney from the SI.

12—*Adresse de l'Internationale situationniste à l'assemblée générale de l'Association internationale des critiques d'art réunie le 14 avril dans l'Exposition universelle de Bruxelles*, signed by A. Khatib, H. Platschek, W. Korun, G.-E. Debord, G. Pinot Gallizio, and A. Jorn in the name of

the Algerian, German, Belgian, French, Italian, and Scandinavian sections of the Situationist International. On the back of the tract: "Classless society has found its artists. Long live the Situationist International!" Court proceedings were engaged against Walter Korun for his role in this scandal.

24 April–31 May—Jorn show at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in London.

26—"First Industrial Lecture" in Alba, Italy. Tape recorded reading, in the presence of Debord and Pinot Gallizio, of the Italian translation of the *Report on the Construction of Situations* by Guy Debord.

May

—*Rapporto sulla costruzione delle situazioni*, the Italian edition of Debord's *Report on the Construction of Situations*, presented by Pinot Gallizio, Turin.

—"Interview with Asger Jorn" by Walter Korun, concerning changes in experimental art before and after Cobra (1948–1951) in vol. V, n° 4-5-6, of *Kunstmeridiaan* (*Taptoe* 58), from the Taptoe avant-garde gallery in Brussels.

30—First show of industrial painting by Giuseppe Pinot Gallizio, assisted by Giors Melanotte, Notizie Gallery, Turin. Publication of *Elogio di Pinot Gallizio* by Michèle Bernstein.

June

—Second edition of Debord's *Report on the Construction of Situations*, Brussels.

—*Internationale situationniste* n° 1. Central bulletin published by the sections of the Situationist International. Editor, G.-E. Debord. Editorial board: Mohamed Dahou, Giuseppe Pinot Gallizio, Maurice Wyckaert.

July

4—*Difendete la libertà ovunque*, tract from the Italian section of the SI protesting the internment of the “otherwise completely uninteresting” painter Nunzio Van Guglielmi, in Milan lunatic asylum, who slightly damaged a painting by Raphael (*The Crowning of the Virgin*) by attaching a manuscript placard to the window protecting it that read: “Long Live the Italian Revolution! Out with the Clerical Government!”

7—*Au secours de Van Guglielmi!* French tract by Asger Jorn in the name of the SI, Paris.

8—Reopening of the industrial painting show by Pinot Gallizio at the Gallery Montenapoleone, Milan. Reissue of Michèle Bernstein’s *Elogio di Pinot Gallizio*. Asger Jorn gives a lecture on industrial painting in Turin.

September

3 September through mid-October—Jorn show at the Van de Loo Gallery, Munich.

—Debate opened by Constant about Asger Jorn’s ideas (“On our means and perspectives” *IS* n° 2).

—*Pour la forme. Ébauche d’une méthodologie des arts* printed, a collection of texts by Asger Jorn written and

published in various languages, notably “Image et forme” (1954), “Forme et structure” (1956), “Structure et changement” (1956), “Contre le fonctionnalisme” (1957), “Les situationnistes et l’automation” (1958). Published by the Situationist International, Paris.

October

10—Opening of the café La Méthode, rue Descartes, in Paris.

—*10 jaar experimentele kunst: Jorn en zijn rol in de theoretische inventie* (“10 Years of Experimental Art: Jorn and his role in Theoretical Invention”), text by Debord published in Dutch in *Museumjournaal*, series n° 4, Otterlo, Netherlands.

—Walter Korun, from the Belgian section, is relieved of his duties.

November

10—“Amsterdam Declaration” by Constant and Debord (*IS* n° 2).

18—“Le surréalisme est-il mort or vivant?” (Surrealism: Dead or Alive?), debate organized by Noël Arnaud at the Cercle ouvert, Paris. Scheduled participants: Guy Debord, Henri Lefebvre (sick), Amadou, Sternberg, and Tzara (all three absent). Debord’s presentation, accompanied by guitar and played in his presence from a tape recorder, provokes indignant shouts from the defenders of Surrealism.

—*Manifest*, from the German group Spur (G. Britt, E. Eisch, L. Fischer, H. Prem, D. Rempt, G. Stadler, H. Sturm, H.-P. Zimmer) and Jorn, Munich.

—Translation into German of the “Amsterdam Declaration” (*Erklärung von Amsterdam*) by Constant and Debord, and of the “Theses on Cultural Revolution” (*Thesen über die kulturelle Revolution*) by Debord, published by the German section of the SI to serve as preliminary discussion for the Third SI conference.

December

—*Internationale Situationniste* n° 2. Central Bulletin published by the sections of the Situationist International. Editor: G.-E. Debord. Editorial Board: Mohamed Dahou, Asger Jorn, Maurice Wyckaert.

—Publication, initially scheduled for May 1st, 1958, of *Mémoires* by Guy-Ernest Debord, load-bearing structures by Asger Jorn. Published by the Situationist International, Copenhagen. The cover is made of blank heavy-grade sandpaper.

To Gallizio

Wednesday morning [8 January]

My dear Pinot,

Your exhibition offers us *extremely important* opportunities. We are involved in discussions, but still unsure of the outcome. We need a dozen photographs of your paintings immediately—especially the latest ones, those that were not photographed for your Denmark monograph.

I hope you can take these photographs immediately, and get them to me by Thursday, January 23rd (*giovedì, 23 gennaio*), at the latest.

After debating this extensively, Jorn, the gallery,¹ and I can offer you the following essential guidelines:

1) The paintings must be the most *stunning*, the most *shocking* possible. For example, *La Gran' Paura* is not the *maximum* in this sense, but the *minimum*. (Over the last six months or year, several painters in Paris have been using new materials, which make *La Gran' Paura* less surprising now than it was when you made it.)

Therefore, I'm really counting on the photos of your latest experiments—which you described to me as painting “reproducing itself by parthenogenesis”! And if you still have time to make one (or two) of them *even more extreme* the day you take the photographs, that would be very good.

2) These photographs should show the paintings in which the search for *new materials* has been pushed farthest, and as much as possible *exclude figurative paintings*, or paintings whose subject—a drawing style—would take away interest in the materials. (For

1. René Drouin.

example, it is difficult to see new shades of color or even *resins* in a photograph. The eye is naturally drawn to recognizable figures instead. Therefore, eliminate figuration as much as possible, especially since we have all that very well represented in the images from Denmark.)

3) All the photographed canvases should be very *different* from each other in terms of material and formal experimentation. Try to reproduce a typical example of each of your experiments rather than a panorama of your usual means.

In short: *nothing can be too violent* because we *have presented you here as the most violent painter of the 20th century*. The greatest risk is that someone might tell us that Gallizio makes too many things which are recognizable and not shocking ...

So you have free rein to indulge in the greatest experimental excess. But I need the photos by Thursday.

In haste. Yours,

Guy

To Gallizio

13 January 58

Dear Pinot,

Thanks for your letter and your efforts on behalf of Asger's painting—Asger has strong hopes of organizing your Paris exhibition. The Tapié you spoke to me about—it is in fact Michel Tapié?¹—is our worst enemy in Paris, in terms of art theory he supports a false modernism linked to all the reactionary enterprises (Georges Mathieu ...).² If you can insult him in the name of the Italian Situationists, it would result in good publicity for Paris.

In regard to Olmo: we trust you here. I think that you are responsible for research in Italy, and your judgment suffices. Otherwise the individual affective relations of each with the others would always have to be considered.

I don't personally desire Olmo's *trust*. I don't think this is of any importance, even though I find Olmo very likeable, and even though I obviously never did anything to win or betray Olmo's trust—what would be the purpose of that? I have no need to fabricate *fake disciples* to support ideas on my behalf that I would not overtly present to my friends. Not everyone uses Simondo's curious methods. But if every critique between us is going to be taken as an *offense*, this will completely remove the value of our *approval*, which will then be simple politeness.

In the end, if Olmo has confidence at least in you, and if you make certain efforts in common, that already seems very good to me. These petty questions will generally grow less important as we start to make real headway.

1. Michel Tapié, French art critic.

2. Georges Mathieu, French painter.

3. *Nervenruh! Keine Experimente!* ("Be Calm! Don't Experiment!") signed by Asger Jorn and Hans Platschek, January 1st, 1958, Munich.

4. Tract from the French section. A single line of text printed on a band of paper 2 cm tall, 90 cm long: "If you are tired of imitating demolitions; if it seems to you that the fragmentary repetitions expected of you are surpassed even before coming to be, contact us to organize new powers for the transformation of the ambient environment at a higher level." Situationist International, 32 rue Montagne-Geneviève, Paris, 5th.

We now have a German section whose first manifesto I am sending you.³ We are particularly happy with this development. I am also enclosing the proofs of an *Adresse aux producteurs de l'art moderne*, as a "filiform tract."⁴

See you soon, we hope. All our best,

Guy

To Jorn

Tuesday [14 January]

Dear Asger,

I did your "translation." It will all be typed up in two days, I think. We also need to look together at some very useful cuts—and perhaps 2 or 3 sentences to complete it?

If you want to stop by my place *Saturday morning, around 11 o'clock*, I will be here. Or you could set a time for me to come by your place, when you like? I also think that if we want the business in Amsterdam to take place—and not against us—a visit to Holland will be necessary next week, so that Sandberg¹ will be convinced *immediately*, if he is ever going to be.

Regards,

Guy

1. Wilhem Sandberg, director of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

To Jorn

Saturday [18 January]

Dear Asger,

Ralph was in Paris and left just as quickly. It is absolutely necessary for you come to my place tomorrow, Sunday afternoon, at 5:30, to take care of the urgent business together.

I'm sorry to give you such late notice, and for a day when I know you are very busy, but there is no other way of doing this.

Regards,

Guy

P.S. Please bring the text that I wrote against Olmo.¹

1. *Remarques sur le concept d'art expérimental.*

To Sandberg

Paris, 25 January 1958

Dear Mr. Sandberg,

Thank you for your January 23rd letter, *bijlage*¹ n° 7214. We will send some copies of the German section's first manifesto shortly.²

Today we are gathered in a Situationist conference that reunites Walter Korun and from Italy, Pinot Gallizio, with the French group.

In regard to the idea of a "Cobra" exhibition in

1. "Reference."

2. *Nervenruh! Keine Experimente!*

Amsterdam—a long debated idea—the current situation as we understand it is as follows:

1) Dotremont does not seem to understand that what makes Cobra profoundly interesting is due not merely to local and stylistic considerations, but to its distant repercussions within the historical development of modern art and the most extreme innovative experiments of today—which we believe we represent.³

2) We are absolutely opposed to any fixed veneration of “Saint Cobra.” Cobra is interesting because of the climate of experimental research and perpetual renewal it has managed to create—not as another formalism, like neoprimitivism.

The most important Cobra artists are fully conscious of this, and of the need for a larger and more current exhibition, which should be the contemporary equivalent—considering the great progress attained since then—of what Cobra attempted in its era. We believe we can invite you to take similar risks. We’re fully aware of the importance of the turning-point you made possible ten years ago,⁴ when the general opposition of the critics against Cobra was more ferocious than it will be for our enterprise. (Speaking of the most important painters, we are thinking explicitly of Appel,⁵ Constant, and Jorn, the first two being in any case proponents of a larger exhibition, and Jorn is among the signatories of this letter.)

3) In view of the developments that we are presenting to you here, Dotremont announced in Belgium and Paris that he would give up organizing the exhibition to concentrate on writing a proper history of Cobra. So that the show can take place in a cogent manner, we offer the propositions set out in paragraph 4:

4) To present at the same time two distinct events:

a. A historic section (49–51), grouping together the

3. Christian Dotremont, Belgian poet, cofounder of Cobra, editor-in-chief of the eponymous journal (1948–1951).

4. Cobra’s “First International Exhibition of Experimental Art,” which caused a scandal, was organized by Sandberg at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in November 1949.

5. Karel Appel, Dutch painter, co-founder of Cobra.

most important documents and works by precursors to Cobra, along with those of Cobra proper, as well as research carried on parallel to and following the dissolution of Cobra. We propose Walter Korun as secretary for the historical section. His activity in Belgium over the previous few years and the agreement obtained for him within the Situationist International implies our absolute confidence.

b. A contemporary section centered on present Situationist research, including a small exhibition of various documents from conferences, and a demonstration of the construction of ambiances in everyday life in Amsterdam for the duration of the exhibition. We propose that Guy Debord be secretary for this section.

5) We sincerely hope to meet with you as soon as possible to discuss these propositions, and in particular to bring you up to date on the constructive program alluded to in paragraph b.

Please accept, Sir, the particular expression of our feelings of respect and confidence.

For the Situationist International:
Debord, Jorn, Korun, Pinot Gallizio

To Sandberg

Paris, 26 January 1958

Dear Mr. Sandberg,

Following a conversation that we just had with Dotremont, we add to our letter of yesterday the following clarifications:

1) Dotremont tells us the rumors about him giving up organizing the exhibition are false. We note this misunderstanding.

2) Except for this, we maintain all the terms of yesterday's letter, especially those concerning the responsibilities that Walter Korun should assume so that we can engage ourselves in this enterprise.

Hoping to receive your news shortly, please accept our most sincere salutations.

For the Situationist International:

Debord, Jorn, Khatib, Korun, Pinot Gallizio

To Gallizio

Thursday 30 January

My Dear Pinot,

I hope you had a good trip. It's only been a few days since you left¹ and already the tumult over your glory grows great, despite the discretion we maintain. The word going around is that never, in the history of modern painting, has an absolutely unknown painter been seen to abruptly emerge from a world entirely foreign to the art market and, all of a sudden, obtain the consecration of the Drouin gallery that so many second-rate Dangelobaj² wouldn't hope for after fifteen years of intrigues and efforts. They still don't know you stayed in Paris only five days to obtain this result. Modigliani is avenged.

Obviously our comrades are not in the least surprised—although the success almost surpasses their

1. After the 2nd SI conference, held in Paris on January 25th and 26th.

2. Portmanteau name formed by Dangelo (Sergio) and Baj (Enrico) from the *Movimento Arte Nucleare*.

expectations—since the basis of our agreement is to expect only the extraordinary from Pinot and some others. Let me briefly remind you of the serious work that you’ve been charged with, that must be carried out in less than three months.

1) The fabrication of rolls of industrial painting (on telline) to cover *all the walls* of the Drouin gallery—for which I will shortly provide the floor plan and exact measurements.

2) The fabrication of a roll of *carta dipinta industrialmente*,³ to be cut into equal pieces, folded in two, and sold on the day of your opening at the Drouin gallery and by professional newspaper vendors who will sell each piece of the “latest work of Pinot Gallizio” for 20 francs throughout the entire surrounding intellectual quarter.

3) The fabrication of large panels of *populit* covered with resin, iron, and all the new materials you showed us in your experiments here.

4) Research on new scents and the organization of olfactory ambiances in the gallery (pleasant-uncommon).

A special scent to be burned in a brazier set on a sidewalk on the rue Visconti.

5) The preparation of a *new aperitif* (in my opinion, from a series of 3 or 4. It would be good to bring in Drouin on this and let him make the choice).

6) The urgent purchase of useful music.

There’s no need to remind you how much we are all counting on you, and how decisive your role is in this enterprise. Your Situationist friends and Drouin himself are taking on uncommon risks, which are the price of uncommon research. I think it’s important the work be very well advanced on all points by the time Drouin makes his trip to Alba.

3. “Industrially Painted Paper.”

Write me soon. I wish you good luck with the work. Michèle sends you her best. Hafid as well. Please give my respects to Donna Augusta.⁴ Best wishes to you,

Guy

P.S. Remember the money from Claude Viseux.⁵

And could you see to the translation of my *Report* into Italian? I don't mean you yourself, you have too much work. Korun is now translating the text into Dutch. And Simondo was responsible for the Italian translation—now that he's been excluded,⁶ we must find someone else.

4. Augusta Rivabella, Gallizio's wife.

5. Claude Viseux, Abstract Surrealist painter, close to *Phases*.

6. At the conference in Paris with Olmo and Verrone.

To Gallizio

3 February 1958

Dear Pinot,

Jorn asks that the painting in Turin be sent as quickly as possible to Brussels.

Everything is going well for via Visconti and Amsterdam.

Sincerely,

Guy

To Korun

5 February 1958

Dear Korun,

Last week Sandberg met with Dotremont and Alechinsky¹ and then very briefly with Jorn just before leaving Paris. The neo-Cobra group proudly refused the conditions we set out in our letter of January 25th. Jorn held firmly to our positions. The results are given in a letter sent to us by Sandberg on January 31st.

1) Given our opposition, the all-Cobra event has been abandoned.

2) Sandberg regrets not knowing about our plan (paragraph 4b) until his return to Holland. He thinks it would not be fair to neo-Cobra to carry out 4b alone, at this time, instead of the Dotremont project.

3) Sandberg wants to discuss “carrying out a program much larger than 4b at some future date” with us, which is to say, an entirely Situationist event.

Of course this information is entirely confidential. We can say that all this developed just as we expected, with the Alechinsky group choosing war. If you see Sandberg before we do, you can tell him in person about the details we have already established—on the *dérive*, etc. We can also, to broaden our event, return to the plan of a historical section—the origins of the current Situationist positions—which would display, among other things, the work of the Imaginist Bauhaus and of Lettrism, which isn’t well known, and important.

Now our most urgent business is organizing the event at Drouin. This poses a general *editorial* problem

1. Pierre Alechinsky, Belgian painter who joined Cobra in March 1949.

because the first issue of the review should appear then—and there are also the lectures we must record beforehand. I think it would be good to meet soon to discuss this work specifically. Do you want to return to Paris one weekend in the near future, with Wyckaert if possible? I can house one of you in my international attic as long as you like.

Yours,

G.-E. Debord

2. *Liga nieuw beelden*, union of Dutch architects, founded in 1954, advocating the collaboration between architects and artists.

P.S. Do you know anything about the architect Charles Karsten who, in the name of a *Liga nieuw beelden*,² from Amsterdam, just sent a first favorable response to our appeal *To the Makers of Modern Art*?

To Gallizio

10 February 58

Caro Pinot, grande e nobile amico,¹

After discussion, I'll begin by giving you our opinion—unanimous—about Olmo.

We were ready to pay for some of his recordings, and of course to credit their author. His recordings were to be part of a larger collection of *primary materials*, creating an ambiance that conceptually has nothing to do with Olmo. He is not a Situationist and would not pass for one. We preferred Olmo to others because of his past involvement with experimental concepts of the Imaginist Bauhaus, and because of the friendship you still maintain with him.

1. "Dear Pinot, great and noble friend."

But it's unthinkable for Olmo to claim to personally direct the acoustic portion of a Situationist event (an event that is, by definition, *unitary* in its means and in its ends). Beyond the practical imbecility of his pretentiousness—why would we promote someone who flatters himself for being in disagreement with us, and whose ideological rationale for this disagreement is laughably stupid?—not to mention the base careerism it reveals, Olmo has never understood the theoretical problems of modern research, or known what the construction of an ambiance can be. He spoke of “ambient” music—a simple word, like “antistyle” for Baj—merely to get close to us. In reality, he still has a 19th-century conception of the composer presenting his personal works. His only perspective is via the radio, as in concrete music, or electronic music.

Moreover, we should account for a fact we have overlooked: two years ago, in Paris, a young man named Jean-Michel Rankovitch (who is the nephew of Marshal Tito, and a friend of Michèle's) presented a show in which inaudible ultrasounds provoked certain psychological effects in the audience. Everyone knows that this is more advanced, in terms of how our Situationist experiments are defined.

Therefore, would you advise Olmo that the paper that you gave him is henceforth absolutely useless, because the whole Situationist International has agreed to break off negotiations with him, on the following grounds:

- 1) We will never accept any element of acoustic ambiance by someone with Olmo's retrograde ideas—even if someone pays us.

- 2) We definitively cease discussion with Olmo, whose case will henceforth be treated like that of Simondo.

Accept, *carissimo* Pinot, the greetings of the entire *squadra di Parigi*.²

Guy

P.S. For the odors, we will discuss the matter again here, and I will write back to you. But my first thought is that there's no need to bother creating a scent in *a small bottle*: just make a scented ambiance by burning certain base resins directly, as you propose, inside and in the street.

2. "Paris team."

To Jorn

Tuesday, 4 o'clock [11 February]

Dear Asger,

You did not come at the time we agreed on, and you haven't called. Meanwhile, aside from the work you know about, we should have been quick to foresee certain developments that have arisen in the Drouin business that I couldn't talk to you about the other night because Haese¹ was with you.

I know you are busy. But I find that I've spent far too much of my free time during the last two weeks trying to meet with you.

I'll expect you again at my place on Thursday at 3, and will wait only a half an hour.

Be sure that I will not propose another meeting.

Sincerely,

1. Roël d'Haese, Belgian sculptor.

Guy

To Gallizio

Domenica, 16 febbraio 58

Carissimo Pinot, grande e nobile amico,

Thanks for your last letter (technical detail: there are several words I haven't been able to decipher).

I am responding to you, again, in great haste, which I hope you'll excuse considering how much work I have on my desk (and Jorn even more, because he is constantly disturbed by art lovers who want to buy paintings that he no longer has time to paint ...).

Here are the principle points to note:

1) For Olmo, it is really over as we all think. But *madder still* (the 2 million!). Simondo and Olmo are not only idiots but repugnant people who should be treated in exactly in the same manner, and this, it seems to us, even in the minutiae of daily life. To be given a wide berth.

2) It would be good if you can have a second *Tèremi-nofono* (certainly to wipe out the frightful little Olmo). But this is not essential. Henceforth it will be good to present *Cocito's invention* as a means of modifying and organizing the *primary acoustic material* we are using to construct ambiances.

I'll therefore urge Asger to send you a small picture, although I cannot guarantee that you'll receive it post-haste.

3) I am going to contact Claude Viseux (Drouin should give me his address).

4) About Drouin: In principle, the show is set for the beginning of June (and could last several months), so we have time to thoroughly prepare, and also to benefit from the summer months when the most foreign tourists pass through.

But: this news has provoked certain disquieting maneuvers from our enemies (Mathieu, Tapié) who are apparently exerting certain financial pressures on Drouin. They want to add something that represents them in our show at any cost, because they sense it's exceptionally important. Naturally, we will have none of this. Trust us to make the right maneuvers in response.

5) Before printing your roll, make 3 or 4 samples—on a meter, for example—and send them to us here, so we can chose the best for industrial development. This is Drouin's idea, and I think it is good.

6) Don't think about printing on paper for now—Drouin hesitates to accept the idea of selling the prints like newspapers, because he thinks this will vastly devalue the painting itself, which should sell.

7) Send me a *good photograph* of the letter from Drouin,¹ and remember to return the manuscript of *In Praise of Pinot Gallizio*.²

Best wishes to you and yours, *in nome dell'Internazionale situazionista a Parigi*.³

Guy

To Gallizio

21 February 58

Dear Pinot, *G. e N.A.*,¹

O.K. about Viseux, I will wait for your instructions before contacting him (the matter is not important).

Thanks for Michèle's manuscript. I will be happy for

1. Letter of 25 January 1958 from René Drouin to Gallizio, informing Gallizio of his interest in undertaking an exhibition of Gallizio's paintings.

2. By Michèle Bernstein, extracts in *Internationale Situationniste* n° 2.

3. "In the name of the Situationist International in Paris."

1. An abbreviation of his emphatic address.

Pistoi to do the translation of my *Report*—this should help bring our positions together even more.

Remember to send me the photograph of the letter from Drouin (this being ultrasecret).

I am waiting to see Asger to urge him to send you the promised painting. But it is easier to communicate with you than with him at the moment. I haven't seen him in 8 days, and at our last conversation he was sick, he thought he had the beginnings of angina.

I have no news from Korun, but I will write to him right now.

I'm still writing to you in great haste, before handing over a huge job to our printer by March 15.

Kindest regards,

Guy

To Korun

21 February 58

Dear Korun,

Following up to what I wrote to you on 5 February, we need to hurry editing the journal, for which texts should be returned to the printer by March 15th.

Can we meet before then—at least 8 days before—in Paris or in Brussels if you prefer? Choose a date.

Regards,

G.-E. Debord

To Gallizio

Thursday [27 February]

Dear Pinot,

Postponing the show to May 26¹ is not bad, if it is compensated by the fact that Pistoï will send the painting to Paris himself.

(I'm continuing this letter the next day. Sorry—the arrival of a friend interrupted my writing. Then we drank a lot, and I'm only now getting up.)

I have *no more news about what is happening with Drouin*.

But stay confident.

Bravo for the “tereminophone.” And for the other anticipated works.

Now I am going to the printers.

Best to all of you.

Guy

1. The first exhibition of industrial painting by Pinot Gallizio took place on May 30, 1958 in Turin.

P.S. I expect Korun here next week. Have the printed materials sent to me from Turin as soon as they're ready: we'll distribute a small quantity in France and in Belgium.

To Gallizio

Venerdì 28 [February]

Carissimo Pinot, Grande e Nobile Amico,

Thank you for your two letters, received yesterday and today: we are ourselves *enthused* reading them.

Asger sent me word: He has been sick. He is doing better—but I have not seen him. Stay confident about the unfolding activities on the rue Visconti. Hafid just had a new idea for your preview show: you will arrive by taxi on rue Visconti, where the guests will already be gathered, and we'll unfurl a roll of industrial painting, like a red carpet, between the taxi and the gallery door. This also presents a nice symbolic meaning—"I walk over my painting."

All the best,

Guy

To Wyckaert

Best address

Debord

1, Impasse de Clairvaux

Paris 3rd

Saturday 1 March

My Dear Wyckaert,

I discovered Korun's urgent letter only yesterday evening. I am writing you in great haste about our meeting, and I'll write a longer letter soon in response to Korun's, which I approve entirely.

Unfortunately it was too late to come to Brussels this weekend (I had accepted other appointments and of course Jorn, still suffering a little from angina, could not be contacted).

We can set the meeting for next weekend—if possible I will come with Jorn, otherwise alone—if this date also suits you and Korun.

Could you tell me at your earliest convenience:

- 1) If you are available next Saturday?
- 2) At which address we can find you together.

In any case our project will certainly be delayed at the printer by one or several weeks—so our meeting will be useful even for the first issue of *Internationale Situationniste*. Everything is going very well here and in Italy.

Our best wishes for your wife's prompt recovery.

Kindest regards,

G.-E. Debord

P.S. Korun asked us to give you our opinion on Jaguer¹ and *Phases*. We can guarantee you that in Paris—and even in places that are not very advanced—the review and the person are completely discredited.

1. In 1954, Édouard Jaguer founded the review *Phases*, close to Surrealism and lyric abstraction.

To Gallizio

3 March 58

Caro Pinot, G. e N.A.,

Two points to communicate in haste.

1) Korun has done good work in Belgium. Niels,¹ Asger's famous collector friend, has already purchased one of your paintings, without having seen it; he will select it from those shown at Drouin.

2) I will be very pleased if Pistoï publishes his translation of my *Report on the Construction of Situations* (this is the *real title*, the rest is only a *subtitle* and can even be dropped) but on the following conditions:

a. His translation should be *rigorously unabridged*.

b. It should be accompanied by a short note, by you or by Pistoï, saying that since the publication of this *Report* (in June 1957), the Situationist International has been formed (in July 1957), integrating the Alba Experimental Laboratory, the Lettrist journal *Potlatch*, etc. In short, relate this text to the current development of our activity.

Yours truly,

Guy

1. Albert Niels

To Gallizio

[Brussels, 8 March]

A Situationist snow is falling on Brussels. Everyone awaits industrial painting. We are sorry you had to miss this meeting. We saw Dangelo; we acted like we didn't see him.

Our affectionate greetings to all of you in Alba.

A post card of the *Manneken Pis* (a Brussels landmark; a statue of a naked boy pissing).

Guy, Rob and Maurice Wyckaert, Wilma
and Walter Korun

To Rumney

Paris, 13 March 1958

Dear Ralph,

We suddenly realized that we have not had any news from you for quite some time; that you still haven't done any real work with us; and that, meanwhile, you do not hesitate to mention your collaboration with the Situationist International in regard to your "quiet" show in Milan.

We do like you, but you should realize that we're not in the habit of overly prolonging negligence in certain affairs, affairs in which you have chosen, like us, to participate.

We are therefore going to promptly dispel the equivocation:

If you would still like to participate in what we are doing, all you need to do is send us, by the end of March:

1) The text¹ intended for our journal, which is in press.

2) A sufficient account of your activities in recent months.

There's no point after March 31st: the journal will only list those who participate in our activities.

Sincerely,

Jorn, Debord

Three copies of this letter were sent—in care of Alloway;²
1075 Dorso Duro; Castello 5139.

1. *Psychogeographical Venice*.

2. Lawrence Alloway, director of the ICA in London between 1955 and 1960, art critic and historian, inventor of the phrase "pop art."

To the Belgian Section

Paris, 13 March 58

Dear Friends,

Jorn was very pleased with the news I brought him from Brussels. He will certainly pass through to see you by the end of March, as close as possible to March 25th. With you, he will raise the propositions you know about to Niels. In this regard, he mostly shares your opinion of d'Haese, but sees him as somewhat dangerous due to the influence he has over Niels.

Yesterday, Jorn wrote to Sieber¹ and sent him documents, so as to propose, after his initial contact with Wyckaert, a more thorough exchange of views. He told him, as we finally agreed in Brussels, that a hastily organized common event would not be interesting, but that we would be open to a dialogue on basic issues with his group. At the same time Platschek² has been entrusted

1. Friedrich Sieber, German painter linked to *Gruppe 11*.

2. Hans Platschek, German painter and art critic, member of the German section of the SI.

with the task of obtaining information about this, and will eventually pursue these conversations in Germany.

For the journal, we already thought of giving you a short extra extension. We would need your work by *March 31st*. I realize that this doesn't give you much time. But we are absolutely counting on it.

I sent some documents to Coulommier.³ Remember to get some Polish addresses.

Korun's proposition concerning a provocative action at the International conference of art critics—April 15th in Brussels—was widely approved of here. We arrived at the following plan. With your agreement:

In Paris, we will print 2,000 copies of the tract to throw at the meeting—if possible during the inaugural session—at the same moment one of us will suddenly take the floor and read the text. (Copies will have been mailed to European newspapers beforehand.)

The most rigorous secrecy must be maintained about this affair: the element of surprise is essential and will ensure our success. It seems that the four of you should be the only ones to know about this project in Belgium—unless, of course, someone else clearly agrees with our positions.

Try to send us whatever information you can get on this conference, its participants, etc., *especially its designation and exact dates* (which must appear on our tract), immediately, by return mail.

Finally, think about the best way of getting several of us in there without any obstacles (invitation cards from contacts that you might have in the press, etc.).

I hope to see you soon in Paris. Greetings from everyone.

G.-E. Debord

3. Julien Coulommier, photographer from Brussels, friend of Wyckert.

To Gallizio

Friday 14 March 58

Carissimo Pinot, G. e N. A.,

As you saw by my card, I found myself in Brussels at the end of last week, to discuss editing our journal and the forthcoming action in Belgium with our Belgian comrades. The ambiance there is very satisfying.

One of our friends, the painter Maurice Wyckaert, is thinking of going to Italy for some time toward the end of April or during May. Korun really encouraged him to pass through Alba to work a little with you, and he would be happy to do so. He could then study your new techniques and, at the same time, help you in your work for the Paris event.

We saw Drouin briefly three days ago—about an old painting by Asger that he is lending for a show—and we set a meeting to resume the real discussion next Tuesday. Drouin seems very worried by the lack of eagerness we have shown in the last few weeks following the Mathieu-Tapié maneuver. We think he is inclined to completely cave in.

For the journal, I am counting on publishing extracts from your historic letter of February 24th announcing the advent of industrial painting.¹ Would you like to supplement the letter with some additional notes about industrial painting (explication of processes, coming developments, etc., a bit of what we said to Drouin)? I need to receive this text *before the end of March*.

Asger promised me that he would send you a painting forthwith. He will spend 8 days in Denmark and bring your monograph.

1. The basis of "Discourse on Industrial Painting and on an Applicable Unitary Art" cf. *Internationale Situationniste* n° 3.

We sent a little ultimatum to Rumney, demanding that he give us satisfactory news of his activities and deliver the text promised for the journal by March 31st, or we would no longer consider him as being with us.

We have new contacts in Germany. Might you have, through Pistoï, some addresses in Poland (artists, journalists, art critics, of the most progressive kind)?

I hope to hear from you very soon. We salute you with all our heart.

Guy

To Gallizio

Venerdì, 21.3.58

Primavera

*Situazionista*¹

Carissimo Pinot, grande e nobile amico,

I thank you for your letter, received yesterday, and the good news it contains.

I am pleased that you are working a lot, *colla pazzia necessaria*.²

Everything is going well with Jorn. I went to Belgium without him, and now he has left for Copenhagen. He will return at the beginning of April. I hope (?) that he sent you the canvas, as he promised me. If not, write to him at rue du Tage so that he does it upon his return.

1. "Situationist Spring."

2. "With the necessary madness."

Asger showed me the issue of *Notizie* (gennaio 1958); it's *very good*. Now the following issue needs to include

the translation of my *Report* and a written presentation by you announcing the development of the movement since Cosio: the Situationist International has sections in France, Germany, Belgium, Scandinavia (Sweden-Denmark), Italy, and even in the insurgent Algerian nation, with advances in organization and discipline (more “sympathetic artists” such as Garelli³; the expulsion of Simondo, etc.).

When will all of this appear?

At the moment we are announcing the creation of a Situationist section in the Scandinavian countries, following the latest contacts with Asger. On the other hand, we cannot count on a British section, since we have nobody English active in England (and still no news from Rumney!).

Everything is going well in Belgium where we are preparing to cause quite a scandal (an intervention against an International Assembly of Art Critics) at the beginning of the World’s Fair. But this should remain *absolutely secret* until April 15th. Don’t speak of it to anyone.

It would be very good to organize something in Turin for Wyckaert, I think. Here is his address:

Maurice Wyckaert, 10 place de la Justice, Brussels.

He is exhibiting at the moment in Brussels.

Korun told me that he wrote you shortly after he was in Paris, at the address “Pinot, Alba,” or something like that; I don’t know if you received it?

As I wrote you on Wednesday, it is going well with Drouin. He gave up the maneuver against us, and he is more and more won over. Of course, I think that we must fully anticipate other attempts by our enemies, in a business of such importance. But several here are beginning to think what you said: *Noi, andiamo avanti, con Drouin o senza Drouin.*⁴

3. Franco Garelli, Italian sculptor, invited from the 10th to 15th of December 1956 to the MIBI show in Turin.

4. “We will go forward with or without Drouin.”

I will also try to pass through Alba—perhaps at the same time as Wyckaert—toward the end of April or the beginning of May. That way we could work together a little one month before the exhibition—for which Jorn and Drouin are inclined to build a wooden labyrinth-set together!

At the moment, I am mostly busy with the journal. Korun is publishing an article on the Situationist program in a Dutch journal.

See you soon. Best to you and yours.

Guy

To Wyckaert

Paris, 24 March 58

Dear Maurice,

I received your express letter in response to Jorn's telegram. Thanks. Also, Korun brought us useful information, and the tract¹ is done—you have certainly already seen the proof, sent to Wilma on Friday.

Jorn had to leave urgently on Saturday, much earlier than planned, for Denmark. Now he will pass through Brussels only on his return, which is to say, in the first days of April. He will secretly bring you our printed tract, which it would be best not to trust to the mail.

Can you also take charge of mailing a hundred copies, as printed matter in envelopes, addressed to newspapers and journals across Europe? This must be done the day before our intervention. For this, I will

1. *Address from the Situationist International to the General Assembly of the International Association of Art Critics*, cf. *Internationale Situationniste* n° 1.

send you a list of addresses (to be completed with your information). We can also send everything from Paris, but since the intervention is happening in Belgium, perhaps it is better to emphasize that it is our Belgian section who carried out the entire operation?

In regard to Lacomblez's journal,² I can respond to you in Jorn's name as in the name of all my friends: it is not up to Jaguer whether Korun and you should contribute to another little journal. The problem is the reverse: it is us—and consequently you and Korun—who can no longer participate in the inoffensive stupidities in which Jaguer will always have his place, but which have had their day. If Jaguer participates in this new journal, it means its place is assured among the 5 or 6 Italio-Belgian journals whose permanent amalgam and ridiculous insufficiency Korun is going to denounce.

We have assumed a still more intransigent attitude with Drouin, about the Tapié-Matheu maneuver that I told you about the other day. And last Tuesday Drouin completely caved in. We made it clear that we were not desperate to obtain this or that partial result but are absolutely determined not to let ourselves be compromised in any way by people who are obviously taking an even more passionate interest in this now than last year.

In regard to the *Phases* project in Poland, Jorn has learned that it concerns a wide-ranging official enterprise, which Jaguer has infiltrated.

Please urge Korun to finish his writing by the end of this week.

I told Pinot that you would pass through Alba soon. I will also undoubtedly spend a short time there at the same time. Pinot asks if an exhibition of your paintings in Turin would interest you?

2. *Edda*, journal close to *Phases* and the Surrealists, founded in 1958 by Jacques Lacomblez in Brussels.

Good luck with your imminent preview show, and the meeting with the Germans. Best wishes to Rob and you,

Guy

N.B.: Jorn's address is:
28, rue du Tage, Paris 13th
(but he is not there)

To Gallizio

Tuesday 25 March

Dear Pinot, *G. e N. A.*,

A word in haste: can you send, by post, to my address, the 800 copies of the psychogeographical map¹ (that you received in Copenhagen last year—to be included in *Eristica*)?

Now Jorn wants to include them in his book *Pour la forme*.

Or rather, save 50 copies for yourself, for distribution in Italy. Send 750 copies. Thanks in advance.

I hope to have news from you soon.

Kindest regards,

1. *The Naked City*, illustration de l'hypothèse des plaques tournantes en psychogéographie, May 1957.

Guy

To Gallizio

4 April 1958

Carissimo Pinot, G. e N. A.,

I am writing in haste and briefly on some important points that I ask you to note carefully.

I am enclosing a copy of the tract that should be used for the intervention against the art critics, April 14th, in Brussels. Keep it ultra secret until that date.

Ralph Rumney responded amiably that his household tasks, and his frustrations with Pegeen, prevent him from collaborating effectively with us, but that he hopes that perhaps this will improve later. Consequently Rumney no longer has anything in common with the Situationists, and we will officially notify him of this in the journal.

The 750 copies of the psychogeographical map that I asked you for must be sent to me with *extreme urgency*, because Jorn's book is almost finished.

For the publication of the *Report* in *Notizie*, I do not agree with their tendency to make cuts.

You need to tell Pistoï that to give us the translation, and when we publish it ourselves his name will be there as translator and this is still a great honor for him.

But if he wants to publish it in *Notizie*, he should do it in full. The least I will accept, if he finds it very long, is that he publish it *in 2 successive issues*, in halves, and announcing clearly in the first issue that the second half will follow. But I don't think this is really about the length of the text. There has been, in the preceding issue of *Notizie*, a *half-hearted effort* on our behalf, which is to say, an attempt to recognize us and show an interest in

us, but by pulling us back a little, toward the old artistic values (thus the Imaginist Bauhaus is talked about now, in January 1958—still citing Simondo, whereas talk about it was nonexistent in 1956 and the talk now should be about the Situationist International).

And also, it seems to me that there is, in *Notizie* and elsewhere, a particular interest in *Jorn's theories* because they are the writings of a “great painter.” What we all need to emphasize, Jorn and us, is the enunciation of an ensemble, the common experience of a movement.

Toward this end, I don't think that the *Report on the Construction of Situations* should be published as my personal work, or under my signature alone. The *Report* can be presented as the theoretical expression adopted at the foundational conference for the Situationist International at Cosio d'Arroscia—and we can say that it expresses the thought of the *directors* of the International among whom one can name Korun (Belgium), Debord (France), Gallizio (Italy), and Jorn (Scandinavia). This way, we would present more of an image of a committee responsible, democratically, to the international movement that we have undertaken to group together.

I ask you therefore to place these directives before Pistoï *as quickly as possible*, and depending on his response we will discuss, you and I, the attitude to adopt with him when I am in Italy.

In fact, I anticipate arriving in Alba between the 20th and 25th of April.

I will specify the date a little later.

Our best to everyone. See you soon,

Guy

To Wyckaert

Paris, 4 April 58

Dear Maurice,

Jorn arrived from Denmark and asked me to tell you that he will pass through Brussels next Friday and Saturday, April 11th and 12th.

You can meet him Friday at the Canterbury; and organize a meeting for Saturday with Korun, whom I am also writing right now.

Jorn will bring you the set of tracts.

How are your plans for your trip to Italy coming? I will be in Alba around April 20th. I would be pleased to meet you there.

Regards,

Guy

To Korun

Tuesday 8 April 1958

Dear Friends,

Establishing an address in Brussels is not an urgent matter. It will only be to facilitate direct communication between the Belgians and the Dutch and you. It's practical value aside, we also think that we should emphasize the *centralized* aspect of the movement. I think that in this regard the signature of the anti-IAAC¹ tract by the six

1. International Association of Art Critics.

people in charge is good, implicitly introducing the idea of a kind of central committee formed by delegates from each section.

We are pleased that the contacts with *Gruppe 11*² are developing favorably. Those of them passing through Paris should come after the beginning of May—before then I might still be in Italy and Jorn in England. We also foresee other meetings with you in May (at the same time, for example?).

For the journal, there is another delay. Now take April 25th as the deadline for sending your writings—to the Impasse de Clairvaux. But we are absolutely counting on this. Moreover, specific references must be sent to me concerning the publications of articles (“History of Taptoe”)³ which you mentioned to me, in Holland and in Belgium, if they have been done as of May, or if they should be very shortly thereafter (this is to publish in the accounts of our editorial activities).

Now to the central point: the action against the critics.

It will perhaps be annoying if Korun isn’t admitted, but it is for a very honorable reason, and the fact of having nothing in common with this organization will add to the purity of the gesture.

The idea of pretty girls distributing the tract is *excellent*, but:

1) Bear in mind that even if the tract is placed in an envelope, its effect will be felt quickly. Most likely, the pretty girls will be politely asked to leave. And if you have at least thirty or so to constitute the replacement groups, what will guarantee that you’ll be able to distribute throughout Sunday? The critics will be arriving in stages throughout the day.

2) This cannot in any case *replace* the public intervention. Our goal is not so much to personally disturb

2. A group of artists from Stuttgart.

3. Published in *Kunstmeridiaan*, vol. V, n° 4-5-6, Brussels; cf. *Internationale situationniste* n° 1.

the critics—who thereafter would be silent about the whole thing. It is to pull off a display of propaganda before the *international press* which, everyday, will carry daily stories from Brussels to newspapers around the world. We must be the *subject* of one of these stories. At an absolute minimum, the tracts must be dropped onto the assembly. Will you still manage to introduce someone—if need be, disguised as a plumber? There should be no reason for the police to guard this particular assembly. We don't have to create a scandal in the Surrealist sense. We simply need to make our position known at a meeting to which we were not invited to speak. At most, it is *impolite*. But it should be noticed.

If you pull off these “Situationist hostesses” coup which in itself is very good—albeit partial—it seems that you should adopt this schedule:

Late Saturday night: mail the tracts as printed matter (for which we sent a list of addresses yesterday, which you should certainly complete, particularly for the Brussels press. Prepare the stamped envelopes immediately).

All day Sunday: distribution—or try to distribute to the press.

Sunday night to Monday: post 100 tracts front side up and 100 back side up on the walls, glued two by two side by side + a posting of 50 tracts mentioning the most creative aspects (*New theater of operations in culture*⁴ and *To the producers of modern art*) that Asger will also bring you—but which should not be delivered at the same time as the *Address*.

Finally, Monday or otherwise Tuesday: at the moment that seems most favorable to you, throw the *Address* into a meeting where the press is present—and if possible try to read the text, even without a microphone and without much chance of being heard.

4. Tract published in January 1958 by the French section of the SI (“The dissolution of the old ideas goes hand in hand with the dissolution of the old conditions of existence”).

This succession of more limited operations avoids any risk of failure. But if you can be sure that the surprise intervention—reading and throwing it into the assembly—will succeed, you should abstain from distributing it on Sunday, and even perhaps from the pasting.

Finally, write me immediately with all the results, and send as many press clippings as possible concerning your exploits; I will need them for the commentaries on the expedition which will be prominently placed in *Internationale Situationniste*.

If, after the scandal, you have a chance to respond to newspapers to clarify something, do so—in the name of the Belgian section—still in the sense of aggravated violence, but referring to the creative perspectives that you represent (but which you don't have to develop in this context).

It's your turn to play. Good luck to all,

Guy

To Gallizio

[9 April]

Did you send the psychogeographical maps?

It's really urgent!

Letter utilizing paper headed with "*1er Congresso mondiale degli artisti liberi (e situazionisti* [added by hand]) *Settembre '56 Alba (Italia).*"

Caro Pinot, G. e N. A.,

Thank you for the translation of the *Report*. I sent a card to Corino.¹

As I already wrote to you, I will soon pass through to see you in Alba.

1. Sergio Corino, Italian translator, with Augusta Rivabella, of the *Report on the Construction of Situations*.

At this moment a meeting with Pistoï should be organized, and we will talk about the Turin business. I will say nothing right now until I've gotten Asger's advice, and studied Drouin's case again.

Asger returned last week. I am surprised that he has not yet sent you the promised painting. I will ask him again.

I wrote to Wyckaert about Pistoï.

I'm leaving Paris Thursday, and Asger is leaving Friday for Brussels, to deliver the tracts that will be used against the art critics.

You can write to me as of now at this address:

Villa San Lorenzo, avenue de Fiesole, Cannes (A.-M.) France.

I will let you know my arrival date as soon as possible.

I hope that speedy cures may be found for all the illnesses in your family.

Michèle was not in Aubervilliers,² but she is doing fine. She sends her best.

Be strong. I hope to make industrial paintings with you.

See you soon,

Guy

P.S. The journal is late, but should appear around May 15th. I will bring you a certain number of copies of the *Address from the Situationist International to the General Assembly of the International Association of Art Critics* at the bottom of which your signature, representing Italy, should give you a greater authority in discussions with Pistoï and others.

2. Aubervilliers, raised to the level of "Situationist City" according to a postcard sent several days previously *To Pinot, situazionista albese e principe zingaro* ("To Pinot, Alban Situationist and Gypsy Prince").

To Gallizio

Saturday 12 April

Caro Pinot, grande e nobile amico,

Asger and I have been in Brussels for two days and we brought the scandal against the art critics into focus.

30 tracts were sent to you this evening; make *the most noise possible* about this business in Italy (IMMEDIATELY).

Wyckaert is sending the photos to Pistoï right away.

For your exhibition in Turin, we are more or less of the opinion that you should *accept*, if Pistoï does certain things for the Situationist International. But don't tell him yet. Tell him that I am coming to Italy—that he and I should meet, and that the International charged me with *negotiating* the conditions of your industrial painting show with him (Asger has developed an excellent plan for this).

I am bringing you Asger's painting (size 15). Prepare the immediate sale.

See you very soon,

Guy

To Gallizio

Tuesday [15 April]

Dear Pinot, *G. e N. A.*,

I have not seen Asger yet. So I don't know the results of his latest steps. But have *confidence*. The moment I have definite news I will write to you.

Yesterday evening I met a man in a bar who mentioned you and your industrial painting (he knows about it through Drouin). Glory forges ahead.

Good luck in Turin.

Best to all,

Guy

P.S. In Brussels the art critics have organized a *conspiracy of silence* with the press. Some critics gathered up our tracts in the street, on the ground, so that the public wouldn't know about them!

Korun is being prosecuted, following a complaint from the IAAC, or at least from its Belgian representatives.

To Gallizio

Saturday [19 April]

Dear Pinot, *G. e N. A.*,

After the battle of Brussels, I am en route to come visit you. I will arrive in Alba Thursday evening (*il giovedì 24 aprile*).

Organize the meeting with Pistoï, and the sale of the painting I am bringing, which is size 15.

If we must give lectures (I also received a request from Franca Carbone in Alba) you should obtain a tape recorder. It's essential: we are staunch proponents of industrial lectures.

See you soon. Best wishes to you and yours,

Guy

To Jorn

[Alba] 27 April 1958

Dear Asger,

I saw Pistoï. Pinot's industrial painting will be shown in Turin from May 12 to 20. After that, there's the question of showing it in Paris. For Wyckaert, only in September.

On the occasion of the Turin show, Pistoï will publish *In Praise of Pinot Gallizio*¹ immediately and, in a separate brochure, the Italian translation of my *Report*. Thereafter, in the June issue of *Notizie*, he will translate a portion of the texts from the first issue of *Internationale Situationniste* and he will also distribute 200 copies of our journal in Italy.

1. Text by Michèle Bernstein in French.

2. The first "industrial" presentation made by Guy Debord and Pinot Gallizio, of the *Rapporto sulla costruzione delle situazioni*.

You can therefore see the urgency of publishing the journal in Paris, and of Pinot's monograph.

Yesterday we successfully gave the first lecture via tape recorder, in Italian: total *stupor* from the audience.²

Pinot has been doing tremendous work since January, and has largely surpassed the promises of the most

experimental works that he brought us then. He is adamant that the exhibition in Paris should take place during the month of June. I also think that any delay right now would be very harmful. We must go find Drouin immediately so that he can decide. Naturally, I expect you to end the negotiation as you as successfully as you started it.

The Belgians succeeded in throwing 1,000 tracts from the fifth floor. They are pleased.

I will be in Paris May 1st. Best wishes,

Guy

To de Wilde¹

Paris, 3 May 1958

Dear Sir,

I received your letter of April 25th as well as a copy of *Museumjournaal*.

I therefore confirm, as was already agreed with Jorn, that I will make a selection from his texts, accompanied by brief commentaries. The whole taking up, as you suggested, a dozen pages in your journal.

You can count on this work by the beginning of September 1958.

Please accept my best wishes.

G.-E. Debord

1. E.L.L. de Wilde, editor in Chief of *Museumjournaal*, the journal of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

To Gallizio

Saturday [10 May]

Carissimo Pinot, G. e N.A.,

I saw Asger yesterday. He is naturally encouraged by our letter from Alba, and by what I told him about your achievements. He is determined to go see Drouin to organize the show in June. I therefore await the result, which I will communicate to you as soon as possible.

Here, the ambiance of relentless work, broken only by a very drunken *dérive* from Thursday evening to Friday morning; you should see by the postcard¹ that I am always busy promoting you in France.

Our best to Donna Augusta, to Giors,² and to you.

Guy

1. From an admirer.

2. Giors Melanotte (pseudonym of Giorgio Gallizio), son of Pinot Gallizio, Situationist in the Italian section.

To Gallizio

14 May 1958

Grande e nobile Pinot Gallizio,

Now Korun and Asger have taken your business in hand with Drouin. Everything will be arranged by tomorrow.

Guy

To the Gallizio family

Sunday 18 May 1958

Grandi e nobili amici d'Alba,

Dear Pinot,

Serious events have taken place here during the week, as you know.¹ I am writing to you, with a great deal of haste, on two points:

1) Asger and Korun *themselves* decided to delay your show until October 10th. They have assured me that they will write to you immediately explaining the reasons they put forward to justify this delay (you will have to agree that these reasons have some merit). We can still be sure about Drouin; but naturally the risk of seeing a fascist dictatorship take power in France in the coming days makes every project concerning Paris rather hazardous.

However, I was led to express *my profound distrust* of Asger and Korun's methods and even intentions in relation to our common work. (They are above all pre-occupied with launching a painter named Pierre Wemaëre,² who does not even know that the Situationists exist.) It was mainly Korun who deceived us, through tactless ambitions as an art dealer.

We must make still another effort if this movement is to really work together toward common goals. If not, it does not exist. I hope that you will not be discouraged by these latest incidents, because I have every confidence in you.

2) In three or four days I will send Pistoï the proofs of our journal, which should be translated in *Notizie*. As the journal itself cannot be printed before

1. May 13th, 1958, in response to on-going pressure from the FLN in Algeria, General Raoul Salan formed a Committee for Public Salvation, which in turn brought the struggling IVth Republic to a state of crisis. By the end of the month, Charles de Gaulle had returned to power. By the end of the year, he had established a new government in France.

2. Pierre Wemaëre, French painter, whose collaboration with Jorn on tapestries constituted the third experiment of the MIBI.

June, it is possible that the political circumstances will prevent its publication. In this case, the Italian publication is all the more necessary, and I am counting on you to inform Pistoï of this. Also from this sad perspective, the position of Italy in current avant-garde culture will come to be greatly enhanced by the disappearance of Paris.

But all is not lost here. See you soon, perhaps even very soon.

Our best to all of you,

Guy

N.B. You can show this letter to Asger, I've already explained to him as much. And we should all speak about it in depth.

To Pistoï

Friday 23 May 1958

Dear Pistoï,

Today I am sending you the proofs to translate for *Notizie*.

The letter "T" is often misprinted in the pages.

You can consider the "Editorial Notes" to be signed by the editorial board, which is composed of Mohamed Dahou, Debord, Pinot Gallizio, and Maurice Wyckaert.

Our journal will be distributed June 10th, unless political events quickly overtake us. The situation is much more unstable than the French press and even the foreign press suggests. Almost the whole army has broken

away. The government is entirely ready to cede to the dictatorship of de Gaulle, and fears above all popular unrest and its prospects. Moreover, the vast majority of the population is shamefully indifferent. The bulk of the antifascist forces is constituted by the communist party and the C.G.T. unions. In short, this struggle has begun under very unfavorable conditions, and our position is bad.

See you soon. Sincerely,

Guy

To Melanotte

Friday [23 May]

Dear Giors, *G. e N. A.*,¹

Today I'm sending the books that I finally found to Alba. The Lautréamont promised to Pinot (but this edition is not complete), and the *History of Surrealism* for Amilcare² and you. I recommend Pinot also read Nadeau's book and I thank him for *Le Nostre Tôr*,³ in which the critique of the lecture was done with incredible courtesy.

Here we are in a battle against military fascism. Its chief is de Gaulle, who has the army with him, not only in Algeria, but in France, Germany, and the Mediterranean. And the police, who are holding Paris against the people. Pfmilin, Guy Mollet, and the others are terrified of the people, and only minor differences with the Massu-Salan-de Gaulle gang. The communists and the representatives of the workers—the unions,

1. This letter was sent in Italian.
 2. Amilcare Pizzi, a printer in Milan.
 3. *Le Nostre Tôr*, an Italian journal.

principally the C.G.T.—are practically alone in defending the Republic.

The parliament really wants to give de Gaulle legal authority, because if it does not, Algeria and the army will never want to return to obedience. Only revolutionary war could destroy the power of French fascism. But Pfmilin-Mollet want above all to prevent it.

The hopes for democracy in France are now slim. And time is not on our side.

This morning I asked Pistoï for the texts for the journal, which will not be distributed in Paris before June 10th.

Kindest regards to you and yours,

Guy

To Gallizio

Sunday [25 May]

Carissimo Pinot, grande e nobile amico,

Thanks for your letter. But rest assured: we are neither sad nor discouraged. We are only pessimistic, because we are well positioned to see the seriousness of the danger, and the weakness of our government of traitors and semi-traitors. Until now, this government, was hoping to cede power to de Gaulle in a legal manner—to avoid a civil war it doesn't want because war would entail the victory of the popular left against a rebellion in which all of French capitalism is involved.

Meanwhile, the government position grows weaker every day (like that of Salan, the “conciliator” in Algeria).

Letter marked with a hammer and a sickle.

The fascists only fear a general strike, and everything will depend on the moment when this general strike is unleashed, and on its extent: be sure, in any case, that the Situationists have particular talents for a strike.

Yesterday the fascists took over Corsica without encountering any resistance (but there may be a strong reaction from the communists who are strong in Corsica). The Massu-Soustelle-Sid Cara committee that was constituted the same day in Algeria is now an insurrectional government whose only option is to vanquish France by imposing de Gaulle's power.

Certainly, history cannot move backwards, but there are occasional far-reaching local regressions.

Meanwhile, nothing is determined, because popular forces still haven't engaged in an open struggle. But this struggle will begin under poor conditions. We are losing a lot of time: all the antifascist demonstrations are forbidden by government forces who, as we have just seen in Corsica, do not want to resist the paratroopers and the fascists for one instant.

You vote today. I hope that the CD¹ is going to retreat and that you will become mayor of Alba, in place of Cagnasso.

OK for your exhibition May 31st. Send me the prints quickly, and good luck.

Thanks for the *Tartufacartolina*.² Who is Benoldi?³

My very warm greetings, and those of Michèle, Hafid, several young girls, and a crowd of Algerian proletarians.

Guy

P.S. Capelle showed me your response, and his article on the scents.

1. Christian Democracy.

2. "Truffle Card," evoking the renowned Alban white truffle.

3. Elio Benoldi, responsible with Enirco Crispolti and Luciano Pistoï for the journal *Notizie: arti figurative*.

To Gallizio

28 May 1958

Caro Pinot, G. e. N.A.,

THIS IS THE FINAL STRUGGLE

De Gaulle is coming. All publications are subject to
censorship.

The people of Paris are gathering.

We're going.

Best to all of you,

Guy, Hafid

Letter on the back of a call to demonstrate Wednesday May 28th, launched by the National Committee for Action and the Defense of the Republic.

To Permild

29 May

Dear Permild,

When do you think you will be finished printing
Mémoires?

When it is ready, I ask that you send me two or three packages of ten copies each, and I will indicate to you thereafter where the rest should be sent.

We have organized a large Situationist demonstration in Paris, but we do not know what it will achieve because of the fascist uprising in the army.

Kind regards to you and your friends in Copenhagen,

Letter sent in English.

G.-E. Debord

To de Wilde

Paris, 11 June 1958

Dear Sir,

I received your letter of June 5th. I did answer your April 25th letter, a few days afterward, but to your address in Groningen probably.

As I wrote you then, after having spoken with Jorn, we were in agreement as to a presentation of various extracts from Jorn's theoretical writings with commentaries by me. You can count on this text for the beginning of September.

Please accept my best wishes,

G.-E. Debord

To Gallizio

16 June

Dear Pinot, *G. e N. A.*,

First, our enthusiastic congratulations for your expected and deserved triumph.¹

You will forgive me for not having responded earlier to several letters. The present period is very interesting and absorbing here. We have all played the roles of little republican heroes: Michèle marched with the Italian workers and sang *Bandiera Rossa* with them, thanks to you. Hafid received a blow from a billy club when he exhorted a group of demonstrators to resist a charge

1. The first exhibition of industrial painting in Turin at the Notizie gallery.

2. Glauco Wuerich, Situationist in the Italian section.

3. Cf. *Internationale Situationniste* n° 1 (June 1958). In the 1997 Fayard edition of the journal, the text of page two has unfortunately not been printed. Here it is, complete:

“Collective editing is the rule in this bulletin. The few articles written and signed personally should also be considered as pertaining to the group of our comrades, and as specific points in their common research. We are opposed to the survival of forms like the literary journal and the art journal.

“All the texts published in *Internationale Situationniste* can be freely reproduced, translated and adapted, even without indication of their origin. Editorial board: Mohamed Dahou, Giuseppe Pinot Galizio, Maurice Wyckaert.”

from the riot police. The scope of the popular demonstrations (certainly May 28th in Paris) pushed the fascists back to a certain extent. But the dirty compromise with de Gaulle is of the most fleeting kind, and only delays the worst. Although the fascists had hoped for a total victory, by surprise.

I only received 1 copy of the invitation to your exhibition from Pistoï (though I should have received 100 to distribute here) and no translation of the *Report*. Is this to say that Pistoï would not honor his commitments, despite the success he is now experiencing thanks to you, or is this an accidental delay?

And what is happening with our issue of *Notizie*? It would be unfortunate not to be able to *exploit* the success of industrial painting right away by *explaining* it (since the press will naturally offer a very distorted vision of our positions).

Under these conditions, should I still send Pistoï 200 copies of our journal, as was also agreed?

On another topic, send me as many articles about you and your exhibition as you can, so that I can show them to Drouin, with whom I should meet soon.

Respond *as quickly as possible* to each of these points.

Thanks from me to Giors, Glauco,² and Amilcare for their nice messages.

Regards to you all,

Guy

P.S. You have the additional honor of being a member of the editorial board for the journal *Internationale Situationniste*³ which is finally ready.

To Gallizio and Melanotte

16 June

Pinot e Giors, grandi e nobili amici,

Thanks for Giors's letter, received this morning.

You needn't be too upset over the current outcome of the French crisis: we are not yet defeated. What has been utterly defeated is bourgeois parliamentarism. De Gaulle can only be a brief stage. The choice, fast approaching, is between fascism and popular government. Attached is our analysis from June 8th,¹ which has since been confirmed (though the fascist side has the best chances). This is going to appear in the journal, which you will receive soon: distribution begins tomorrow.

What you told me about Ralph also confirms what we thought: the poor boy is finished.

What Giors wrote about Pistoï makes Pinot's response to the questions I asked him in my letter yesterday more urgent. If Pistoï prefers Tapié to us, he should be careful: in the future, we will treat him the way that we treated Tapié.

Today the French press announced the scandal Nunzio Guglielmi² created in Milan. You must know more about this affair than we do. It is possible that Guglielmi truly is an idiot. But a priori I don't believe it. You remember the scandal at Notre Dame on Easter Day in 1950.³ They also tried to lock up our friends for an indeterminate period on the grounds that they were mad. The only thing that prevented the police and the church from managing to do so was the protest of artists and intellectuals. It seems to me that it is in our interest and it is our duty to defend Guglielmi's action.

1. "A Civil War in France"
Internationale Situationniste n° 1.

2. Nunzio Van Guglielmi, an Italian painter who was arbitrarily interned after having slightly damaged a painting by Raphael.

3. On 9 April 1950, during the high mass celebrated by the Archbishop of Paris, a bogus Dominican, Michel Mourre, read an address drafted by Serge Berna that ended with the words: "Today, Easter Sunday of the blessed year, here, in the remarkable basilica of Notre Dame of France, we proclaim the death of the Christ-God so that Man may finally live." Pursued by a pack of worshippers, who threatened to lynch them, Michel Mourre, Serge Berna, and Ghislain de Marbaix were arrested.

It is completely in keeping with our ideas, the attack against art-in-the-museums (cf. Jorn's ideas on this subject). Don't you agree with me on this matter?

(Regardless of what this guy really is, just as a matter of principle.)

Can you immediately produce a short tract to send to the newspapers and artists (even including Fontana⁴ and Baj)? Can you print the back side in French and send me a hundred copies?

This would be good between the exhibitions of industrial painting and right as the first issue of our journal is coming out. Also good for Drouin!

I'm attaching a draft of the text.

Send me the press clippings that I asked for yesterday soon.

My warm regards to Donna Augusta and you,

Guy

4. Lucio Fontana, a painter and sculptor, instigator of the first manifesto of Italian abstract art (Milan, 1934).

To Wyckaert

Paris, 16 June 1958

Dear Maurice,

We have been very busy with politics here for a month. The people finally pushed back, but, up to a certain point, so did fascism, which thought it could resolve everything within a week. The final confrontation has been postponed a little, but is certainly inevitable.

You probably know that Pinot's exhibition in Turin, which opened May 30th, has been a triumph, with radio

and television coverage, and that it is moving on to Venice right now. This is also very good for your exhibition scheduled at the same place.

I will send you the journal shortly. You hold an honorary post on the editorial board, so that your name won't be absent from the publication.

When are you going to Italy, and passing through Paris?

Best wishes to you and Rob,

Guy

To Korun

Paris, 16 June 1958

Dear Piet,

You have to excuse me for not having responded more quickly. We are rather absorbed in our nascent civil war, which is far from over.

I do not in any way share Asger's opinion on the effect that your article could produce among our ideological adversaries. I do not find the text too long, and there is no problem concerning the style, as you seem to believe. Unfortunately, there is a fundamental lack of cohesion due to the fact that it presents two distinct essays appended together rather arbitrarily:

1) One text on the economic conditions of contemporary art, which is good in itself, but which lacks the new ideological conclusions that it makes necessary (these conclusions are lacking because they are in fact replaced by the second text).

2) A text that develops very summarily an interesting idea that Asger actually spoke to me about, concerning the possibility of measuring the movement of an economy not by the gold standard but by the quantity of energy available for *self-interested* (artistic) experimental activity.

I told Asger that this proposition necessitated a perfectly organized autonomous development, accounting for—and precisely critiquing—monetary theories that he and I (and I believe I can add you as well) were not aware of. I do not know whose technical assistance we need to develop this idea, but it is obvious that its evocation in your article may well cause great confusion. After having justly criticized the preponderance of the economic point of view in the judgment of the contemporary artistic object, you propose to make art the very yardstick of the economy, *without indicating the transition between the artistic commodity-object of today and the free experimental activity in a new dimension of culture (the construction of temporary environments) to which right now the term “situationist” might possibly be applied*. This is to say that you offer the impression of seriously contradicting yourself, turning in the middle of your text to the extreme espousal of the tendency you previously denounced.

The fault for all this, I think, is too much haste. No problem in our collective action can be resolved by goodwill. We have certain important perspectives that undoubtedly necessitate less optimism and more fatigue. If we fail to *effectively use* the new experimental conceptions that we have already defined, we will always fall back into the art market, yet another pseudo-school of the same outdated artistic kind. Which won't fool anyone for long.

You will undoubtedly remember that I encouraged you on several occasions to assume a place among the first rank in the theoretical development of this movement—publicly, as of the first issue of our journal. All my discussions with you, and my knowledge of your previous role persuaded me that your work with us would be similar. As I still think this, I advise you against publishing—in Holland or elsewhere—an overly rushed text, which is not representative of your capabilities. Of course, you are perfectly free to publish whatever you want under your own name if my critique seems unfounded to you. I could not publish it in our “official organ,” the ideological coherence of which was made my responsibility. But we mention you often in the issue and I hope that you will write a good portion of the next one.

You undoubtedly know that Pinot, widely covered on radio and television, has had a really great success in Turin, and at this moment is continuing the show in Venice.

Warm regards to Wilma and you,

Guy

To Gallizio

Monday Morning [23 June]

Dear Pinot, *G. e N.A.*,

Thank you for your long letter, which I just received. I will write you at length soon. For now I'll note the most pressing questions.

1) Yes, we can print the tract in Paris, but only if it is impossible at your end, because it will take *a very long time* here (2 trips by post, and of course our difficult printer ...). The important thing for this tract is that it be distributed very quickly. If I have to print it here, send me the Italian text immediately, and the exact signatures for the Italian section: we need as many names as possible, but they should all be reliable people. (Write, if you can, the *date* of the Guglielmi scandal in Milan.)

2) I'll do what is needed for Asger. Besides, I have been haranguing the printer five times a week already, but it isn't easy: each time he asks me for money!

3) When will *Notizie* be published, and did they translate all of our texts (from *IS* n° 1)? This seems very important to me. If Pistoï is still torn between contrary forces, we need to seize this occasion to involve him on our side. Everyone will benefit from it, but he especially will.

4) *In Praise of P. Gallizio* can be sent to me as *quickly* as possible for distribution here (and at Drouin's). And I am also waiting for 100 copies of the *Report*.

Best wishes to Donna Augusta, Giors, and yourself,

Guy

Letter written on the back of an invitation to a meeting of the Committee for the Defense of the Republic of the Sainte-Avoïe Quarter, Paris 3rd, 20 June 1958.

P.S. Your new stationery is great.

I am sending you other copies of the journal very soon (the printing isn't finished).

To Constant

26 June 1958

Dear Constant

Your letter pleased me. It is really true that all kinds of neo-Cobra individuals, and even worse, are courting the Situationists—or more precisely, Jorn. But so far they have gained nothing positive out of it, because some of us are absolutely opposed to concessions.

The inanity of the pseudo-experimental art industry is also not without influence over some of our current friends, but I am counting on the very logic of the action that we have undertaken to always carry us toward the most advanced tendency which expresses itself in the SI and which, alone, can reunite the new creative elements. The rest is not interesting because, in the decisive turn that we are experiencing, one's ongoing taste for the old artistic social life condemns one to remain on the side of that life, which is the losing side.

Michèle and I will be in Paris through the end of July. We are counting on your visit.

Regards,

Guy

To Pistoï

30 June 1958

Dear Pistoï,

I just received your letter. 50 copies of the tract¹ have already been sent here by Gallizio and printed in the course of the day. They should be distributed first to newspaper and to the court in Milan (Guglielmi's lawyer).

I will do other things with the text by Jorn that you sent; it contains interesting details.

In a few days you will receive the proofs of Jorn's book, and 200 journals (the printing only just finished).

Eight days ago I received the "praise of P.G.,"² but no *Report*. The copies may have been stopped at customs, *without my being notified*.

I therefore ask that you send me as quickly as possible:

1) some copies in a *sealed letter*.

2) A package through "*certified mail*"—which will enable me to contest its arbitrary seizure.

I am going to Italy at the end of July. Best wishes,

G.-E. Debord

1. *Difendete la libertà ovunque* ("In Defense of Freedom Everywhere" *Internationale Situationniste* n° 2).

2. He is talking about *Elogio di Pinot Gallizio*.

To Gallizio

Tuesday July 1st

Dear Pinot, *G. e. N.A.*,

As soon as I received the text of the tract that you sent me I managed to get it printed in the course of the day. But unfortunately I couldn't set the image (lacking time and money). I did not keep the proposed signatures because it is surely necessary to present our *Italian section* first in this affair—as the Belgian section was for the art critics in Brussels.

Yesterday evening I sent 50 tracts to Pistoï.

Today, I sent: 100 to Pistoï

100 to Asger

100 to you.

Organize an immediate distribution to:

A) Artists (certainly avant-gardists, even Fontana or Baj—but not to Ralph Rumney, to whom I already sent the tract).

B) Journalists.

C) The court in Milan: The examining magistrate and Guglielmi's *lawyer*.

Split the distribution so that you (Pistoï, Asger, and you) don't send it to the same addresses twice.

Don't send it anywhere where it won't have an influence.

You should certainly *break the silence*: let the newspapers know that you have defended Guglielmi's action.

Act quickly and effectively: it is not only *interesting* to do this, you may be Guglielmi's only chance (it is very accurate to say that he has already been "given a life sentence").

I just distributed 50 or 60 tracts in France and in Europe (except Italy, which I leave to you).

Pistoi sent me a second text written by Jorn (on this matter) which contains very interesting revelations. I am going to try to publish a 2nd tract here now—in French—with Jorn's text.¹

I might be able to send it to you in 8 days.

Maurice Wyckaert passed through here and should be arriving in Albisola now.

Situationist affairs are advancing very well in Paris.

See you later. Regards to you all,

Guy

P.S. Pistoi wrote me that he sent the copies of the *Report* at the same time as the text on your exhibition. I have not received the *Report*; it has therefore been seized by customs without my being notified. A serious arbitrary step against the SI.

1. "To Van Guglielmi's Rescue!"
cf. *Internationale Situationniste*
n° 2.

To Gallizio and Melanotte

*W LA SEZIONE ITALIANA!*¹

3 July

Cari Pinot et Giors, grandi e nobili amici,

Today I'm sending you 300 copies of the second tract (in French, in which the whole SI supports your courageous campaign for Guglielmi).

At the same time I'm sending: 200 to Asger

200 to Pistoi

100 to Korun.

1. "Long Live the Italian Section!"

Saturday I will do a direct mailing for France and the other countries (with the exception of Italy and Belgium).

The second tract should be sent to:

- 1) all the people that already received the tract in Italian.
- 2) others, including a wider public.

Get your position published in the press by any means. It is essential to *break their conspiratorial silence*. Demand the *publication of the two tracts in "our" issue of Notizie*, at least as documents submitted for the reader's appreciation. Try to sweep people like Garelli into a common intervention limited to this precise point:

The proof of Guglielmi's "madness" given to the public is entirely, *so far*, insufficient. He should therefore be judged as responsible for an act that is perfectly defensible. If a trial ensues, propose to testify in his favor, to *explain his reasons*.

I will be in Italy within the month. Best wishes to everyone,

Guy

To Jorn

3 July

Dear Asger,

I'm sending you 200 copies of the second tract today. At the same time I'm sending 200 to Pistoï, 300 to Pinot, and 100 to Korun. Make as much noise as you can in Italy: it is there that the problem is burning.

I'm also sending you 2 complete sets of proofs for *Pour*

la forme. Everything is ready for the printer. Make 2 copies of the final layout for the book, including all the negatives, and the subtitles—in the margin—for the last part. All you need to do after that is to send a layout to Pistoï (to whom I'm also sending *Structure and Change* and *Against Functionalism*); and one to me, which Dragor¹ will use to print.

I gave another set of proofs to a man from Rive Gauche,² who was at Dragor's yesterday to pay your rent. He arrived at an unfortunate moment. Dragor, hearing talk of money, said that he would make sure that your landlady was paid. It was therefore essential that the man hand over—against receipts—the check for 10,000 francs that he brought. This was OK. But he suddenly said that in his opinion you wouldn't be coming back to Paris until September! Dragor, whom I've been able to keep working by letting him think that your return was imminent, may well refuse now to do any further printing until he has been paid more.

I will try for the best and, in any case, will bring the negatives to Italy at the end of the month.

Yours,

Guy

1. The Parisian printer of the first two issues of *Internationale Situationniste*.

2. The Gallery of R.A. Augustinci, rue de Fleurus.

To Pistoï

3 July

Dear Pistoï,

I sent Jorn all the proofs for his book today. Once he has set the definitive order he will send them to you. Today I

am sending you two brochures from last year which are part of *Pour la forme*.

I am also sending 200 copies of our second tract on the Guglielmi affair. Jorn and Gallizio have received 500 others, and outside Italy we will make an even larger distribution than the previous one.

Sincerely,

G.-E. Debord

To the Koruns

3 July

Dear Wilma and Piet,

Today I am sending you 100 copies, to distribute as best you can, of a second tract supporting our Italian section's campaign in the Guglielmi affair.

The same police proceedings—internment without trial—have already been employed here against those responsible for the “Notre-Dame scandal” in 1950. But many intellectuals protested in such a way that they had to be released almost immediately. In Italy, everyone finds it normal that someone must automatically be called crazy the moment they demonstrate against artistic and Catholic conventions. Our friends should break the unanimous conspiracy of silence.

Wyckaert was here at the end of last week.

Best wishes,

Guy

To Gallizio

FREE VAN GUGLIELMI!

Saturday 5 July

Dear Pinot, *G. e N.A.*,

Bravo for the imminent exhibition in Milan!¹ Can you send me again a certain number of this edition of your *Praise*? I received very few of the first.

As you can see by the tracts, the *Report* has been held by customs. *It is a scandal!* I asked Pistoï to send me some certified. I have not yet had his response. I would really like to receive some. *Do you have any that you could send me* in a sealed envelope?

I hope that you have in fact received all the copies of the two tracts for Guglielmi. Send me news of the affair.

For mailings, you shouldn't expect a lot of work from Asger. Make an agreement with Pistoï, by telephone, for a certain share of the addresses, and send all the copies as soon as possible. I expect to hear about this.

You need to think about work for Drouin before October 1st if you don't have any more industrial painting! It seems to me that you should hold onto as much as possible of what you have already done. Demand to be paid. If necessary, raise the price per meter. Don't forget that you'll need to cover all the walls of via Visconti.

I am happy that the journal pleased you. It has already raised no small amount of interest here. For the second issue, I am preparing a study that will be entitled "A Decisive Turn: Pinot Gallizio's Industrial Painting."

Remind Giors that he himself should do a study of the (future) technical applications of industrial painting.

1. At the Montnapoleone Gallery, beginning July 8th.

We are ready and waiting for the American painters at rue Montagne-Geneviève.

Michèle and I will arrive in Italy at the very beginning of August. We'll stop in Alba first.

So, see you soon. Our best wishes to you all,

Guy

P.S. I think that you will see Maurice Wyckaert soon. He was here eight days ago, on his way to Albisola.

To Gallizio and Melanotte

*W LA PITTURA INDUSTRIALE MILANESE*¹

Monday 7 July

Cari Pinot e Giors, G. e N. amici,

Saturday I finally received 3 copies (three) of the *Rapporto sulla costruzione delle situazioni*. I found it very good. It is amusing that *Notizie* did not dare to take responsibility for this publication! This is good, since the Italian section of the SI will reap the benefits of the edition.

Can you send me other copies, even a small number in sealed envelopes?

Asger wrote to me that he is thinking about coming to spend a few days in Paris to publish *Pour la forme* before the end of the month. I think that this will be useful.

As I already wrote to you, I will be in Alba in three weeks. I will explain my plans for propaganda between the 1st and the 10th of October in Paris, so that the

1. "Long live Milanese Industrial Painting"

exhibition at Drouin will be the decisive SI victory in Europe.

What is happening in the Guglielmi affair?

Have you received all the copies of the 1st and 2nd tracts that I told you about?

(And can you return *30 or 40 copies of the French tract*—from Jorn—to me, if any are left?)

How does the next issue of Notizie look? If you trust me on this, cede nothing on this point.

I await your responses.

Best wishes to everyone,

Guy

To Jorn

Monday 7 July

Dear Asger,

I just got your letter of the 4th, and the new chapter “Form and Movement.”

I think that *Pour la forme* should be finished in July in any case.

In the journal, I announced its publication as *June*. And every new delay will make it appear more dated because it is a summary of the Imaginist Bauhaus experience.

Up till now I hoped to guarantee publication in July on my own—despite the difficulties created by old Dragor—but the fact that texts are still being added to the mock-up complicates things greatly, and perhaps it will be necessary for you to come to Paris toward the end of the month.

I will ask Dragor today, as you suggest in your letter, and will write you thereafter with his answer about the most useful date for you to come to work.

It seems to me that "Form and Movement" cannot *follow immediately after* "Structure and Change," as you now indicate, because after "Structure and Change" comes "Form and Structure," which is already printed, with set pagination; it starts on page 33 of *Pour la forme*. Today or Saturday you should receive the proofs of the last 2 chapters. Send their layout to me express, including images, subtitles, and epigraphs. I found still more typos in my proofs. You can overlook them; I will correct them myself here.

What is happening with the Guglielmi affair? Have you received the 2 tracts, samples attached?

The customs office is working against us: Saturday it delivered only 3 copies of the Italian edition of the *Report*, in a sealed envelope. The rest are still confiscated.

See you soon. Sincerely,

Guy

To Jorn

Monday 7 July
(2nd letter today)

Dear Asger,

I just saw Dragor.

He agrees to print everything by July 31st on the conditions that you propose.

We began the layout of your new chapter immediately (interrupting all the work in process). Robert¹ will work directly on the manuscript at the end of the chapter.

Robert thinks your presence is necessary—to fix the exact order of the *end* of the book, about which he is completely confused—*Thursday, July 17th*, or immediately thereafter.

Come see me *before going to Dragor's*. I will explain the details of the financial situation in regard to the printer. We can have all the work done for a fairly small amount of money, as long as we pay it in small installments on an opportune schedule.

Sincerely,

1. Linotypist at Dragor's print shop.

Guy

To Asger

Tuesday 8 July 58

Dear Asger,

I wrote you twice yesterday. But today I received your last letter, and I've learned that things at the printer have taken an extremely alarming turn.

Old Dragor, whom I ordered to print your book by the end of the month, has been the victim of a crisis of delirium tremens in which he mixed all the leads for the composition of "Form and Significance" and "Charm and Mechanics"—and tore the still unset manuscript with his teeth, screaming "Jorn is my ruin!" It was apparently an atrocious spectacle.

Under these conditions, Robert, the linotypist and the only one who does a good job there, said that he was leaving immediately. I made a tremendous effort to retain Robert until your arrival, which I promised would be the 17th of July at the latest. He will set what he can until then. Without your help he can't make sense of it.

Your arrival here is essential and should last a few days so as to finish all the work swiftly before the print shop goes bankrupt and, probably, the owner is committed.

I insist that you meet with me before going to Dragor. I will explain several factors we can take advantage of for the financial settlement of this affair.

I'll expect you in 8 to 10 days. Sincerely,

Guy

P.S.

1) I got the money from Rive gauche.

2) For Guglielmi: too late to pull back. We have to attack even more wholeheartedly.

We have never defended Guglielmi's personality, but rather, *a principle*: he is not crazy *because of the gesture that he is blamed for* (it hardly matters to others whether he should really be crazy or not, this would be a poor excuse to *let it go*). The methods used against him (cf. those that you revealed, for the newspapers) are odious and prove he is not taken for a harmless madman: everyone finds these methods to be normal, we are the only ones to denounce them. And the *conventional notion of madness* should be no more respected than Catholicism is.

To Gallizio

Tuesday [8 July]

Dear Pinot, *G. e N.A.*,

I received a letter from Asger who tells me that our tracts are going to have an odd effect on the Italian pseudo-“avant-garde,” because Guglielmi is reported to be “a crazy religious painter.”

Well, so much the better for someone who scandalizes the Italian “avant-garde”!

And of course: you are not defending a man, but *a principle*. You have not said that Guglielmi was a Situationist, nor that his past was interesting, nor even that he was not crazy.

You have said that the *madness of which he is accused is not that*.

(And Michel Mourre, the main instigator of the “Notre Dame scandal,” was a one-time *seminarian*.)

So, DON'T RETREAT in this business. It would be cowardly (to cede to the blackmail over what Baj can call “madness”), and at the point where we are it would be *ridiculous* (the tracts are already distributed outside Italy).

Avanti!

See you soon. Regards,

Guy

To Pistoï

Paris, 12 July

Dear Pistoï,

With your letter of the 9th, I also received the package of 100 copies of the *Report*, finally released. Thanks for everything.

Regarding Guglielmi, I have been told that he was probably really crazy. But it isn't a question of that. What we are defending is that one cannot accept the precise act for which he finds himself interned as sufficient proof of madness.

I am expecting Jorn here in three or four days. We will finish printing *Pour la forme* together—a new chapter is to be added—and you will therefore receive the entirety of the text before the end of the month.

I will stop in Turin around August 1st, and I hope to see you there.

Sincerely,

G.-E. Debord

Letter stamped with a hammer and sickle.

To Trocchi

12 July 1958

Dear Alex,

Congratulations on your arrival in Mexico!

We have also had something very spectacular in Paris: a *pronunciamento*, such as the traveler has less and less the

opportunity to witness in South America. From this first success a kind of fascism progresses each day; the organizations on the Left are in complete decomposition. It is probable that the final battle will occur shortly, under very bad conditions. The only way it could seem to be avoided is if everyone were to surrender without a struggle.

I have it that Midhou was still in good health recently. He is semiclandestine. Before the events of May I was able to respond to his request for, and provide him with, forged papers that said he was a recognized painter, exhibiting in Italy, Belgium, and England.

The era of that lost generation we knew does seem to be gradually coming to an end here, in obliviousness and indifference. We remain, in this old-fashioned end of the world, pleased with ourselves. But the continuation promises to be difficult.

I would be very pleased to see you again, and I hope that the last remnants of freedom will linger in France until your return.

Regards,

Guy

To the Editors of *Museumjournaal*

Paris, 14 July 1958

Sirs,

In response to your letter of 11 July, the third that I have received under various circumstances from the journal *Museumjournaal*, I can assure you, as I have on

two previous occasions, that you will receive the texts concerning Asger Jorn at the beginning of September 1958, at the latest.

Should you wish to announce it in advance, I can give you the title:

“Ten Years of Experimental Art: Jorn and His Role in Theoretical Invention.”

Yours faithfully,

G.-E. Debord

To Jorn

Tuesday 15 July at noon

Dear Asger,

We need you in Paris immediately. Starting Thursday each day that passes will be a day lost for this edition of *Pour la forme*.

The text, which I received this morning and brought to Dragor immediately, is absolutely unprintable because:

1) you have not indicated the *subtitles* in the margins, and those that we find on the manuscript don't work after changes made in the middle of the text.

2) You have not indicated the location for *all* of the images.

What's more, Robert still has set fragments (of about one page) which he doesn't know where to insert.

I think that if you spend a few days here immediately the book can be finished very quickly.

Of course, by paying the printer only in *small installments*, we can certainly lay our hands on the entire run while spending far less than the sum that is theoretically due to him (although we are completely justified in not paying at this point, given the scandalous sabotage of the journal's printing).

You also need to do the layout for the cover, etc.

If you arrive Sunday, for example, we could work intensively at Dragor's starting Monday morning. If possible, write me when you think you will be here.

Regards,

Guy

To Gallizio

Thursday 17 July

Dear Pinot, *G. e N.A.*,

Bravo for the action in favor of Guglielmi! The Americans will buy his work; it's their role. But you dared to call for his freedom, by interpreting his action as rational; this was our role.

A thousand congratulations for the victory in Milan, after Turin. It is a beginning and industrial painting won't stop.

Maurice Wyckaert also wrote me about Drouin. I think that we can, up to a certain point, go along with the *masquerade* he is proposing, so as to mix in our *serious* positions.

But I find the proposed slogan disquieting: "Pinot,

slave to the machine,” or something like that? You shouldn’t be made into just some kind of new Dali, or para-Mathieu. It is unacceptable that you should be put forward, *alone, in a ridiculous role*. I will propose something like: “Pinot Gallizio, Director of the Construction of an Ambiance (from October 10th to 30th),” etc.

But perhaps Asger was right in thinking that Drouin was afraid of Soustelle. Therein lies the whole question: fear of the *Situationists as a movement*.

Yesterday, the police questioned me at length about the journal and the Situationist organization. It was only a beginning. This is, I think, one of the principle threats that came up quickly during the discussion: the police want to regard the SI *as an association in order to set about its dissolution in France*. I protested then and there, emphasizing that no artistic movement has ever judicially formed itself into a legal entity in a declared association. Not being declared, the SI cannot be officially dissolved, but concerted efforts are being made to intimidate us. It seems they take us for gangsters!

So perhaps nothing can be done at Drouin’s, thereby averting the prospect of a “schmaltzy” show. *Capisci?*¹

But then we will have to do something at Loeb² or somewhere else, more courageous, certainly *less compromised* by association with Tapié-Mathieu-Hantaï.³

I expect Asger here any day now.

See you soon, I hope, in Alba.

Regards to you all,

Guy

1. “Understand?”

2. Gallery Loeb, rue de Seine.

3. Simon Hantaï, French painter.

To Gallizio

Saturday 19 July

Caro Pinot, G. e N.A.,

I received your letter the moment Asger arrived here. We are sending all our wishes for Giors' speedy recovery.

We are very pleased with your success, which is becoming *global*. Here are our responses to the questions you pose:

1) *Yes*, you should sell to the American. He's a very good chap (Asger met him in Italy, and spoke to him so that he would buy industrial painting). In general, you should now sell rather *expensively*, but obeying this rule: you should not raise the prices of works that you have already quoted to galleries.

It is a major event to be purchased for the Carnegie Institute two months after the first industrial painting show!

2) So much the better regarding the effect of the Guglielmi tract in Milan. Whoever tries to undermine you now is fighting a losing battle, and will look ridiculous in the eyes of History. Assume the *most firm and menacing position* in the Guglielmi affair, as in every other discussion that presents itself around your show in Milan. In a dozen days Asger and I will be in Italy to support you.

You should not pay the director of your gallery more money. You should *let Pistoï sort out these material details*—as he is responsible for them, according to Asger.

4) Asger asks—and I approve—that from now on a record be kept at the Experimental Laboratory (that you

should ask Donna Augusta to keep up to date): in which *all* the completed projects should be listed—the details of their execution, format, conditions of sale, etc. This becomes increasingly necessary with success.

5) Pay attention to the issue of *Notizie* that is to appear, which should include our translations. Don't let Pistoï imagine that we would tolerate breaking this deal.

6) We both insist that you relax as much as possible. Don't undertake too many exhausting things. You need to be in shape for the show in Paris this autumn.

See you very soon. Regards,

Guy

To Gallizio

29 July 58

Caro Pinot, G. e N.A.,

W LA SEZIONE ITALIANA!

Guglielmi's release (from internment) is a great victory, and foremost for you who gambled—double or nothing—the entire “reputation” you've already built for industrial painting. Now they will recognize in Alba that you are not crazy, and that you know if others are or not.

As for Milan, Asger says: there's nothing we can do since we cannot prove that the director received the missing 15 meters.

You should disdainfully overlook this little annoyance

alongside your hugely successful exhibitions (Munich, Pittsburgh, etc.).

We have to save our protests and attacks for more serious things.

Sincerely. See you soon,

Guy, Jorn

To Constant

3 August

Dear Constant,

If you have some text to send immediately, it would help me: tomorrow we are beginning to set a part of *Internationale Situationniste* n° 2. The final deadline will be September 7th.

See you soon.

Best regards to Nelly¹ and you,

1. Constant's wife.

Guy, Michèle

To Constant

8 August 58

Dear Constant,

I hope that you can send me the article you mentioned at the beginning of September (no later than the 7th).

Yes, any spirit of the “pictorial” must be stamped out and this, even though it’s obvious, isn’t easy to get everyone to acknowledge.

I don’t think that we want to overestimate the importance of Surrealism in relation to the other research that you cite. It even seems to me that the *aesthetic* that Surrealism finally imposed is less sophisticated. The privileged place of this movement—which is to say, in the first issue of the journal, the extended critique devoted to it—comes from the fact that Surrealism presents itself as a total project, concerning a whole way of living. It is this *intention* that constitutes Surrealism’s most progressive aspect, which obliges us to compare ourselves to it, so as to differentiate ourselves (the transition from a utopian revolutionary art to an experimental revolutionary art). Of course, we are still a long way from this transition. Everything that truly interests us can still only be on the level of demand. Thus the lack of realism is an almost inevitable fault but it must be fought as much as possible among us. I hope that your article¹ brings a good number of missing elements into this debate, and severely criticizes certain overly unrealistic points in the first issue. Mondrian certainly introduced many of our current positions (“art is a simple stand-in product in a period where life lacks beauty. Art will disappear from

1. “On Our Means and Perspectives,” *Internationale Situationniste* n° 2.

life as life itself gains in balance,” etc.). But was it from a revolutionary perspective, or rather more from a mystique of “equilibrium”? It is understood that we have no *doctrine* to approve and share. The experiment that we want to carry out, if we are capable of really carrying it out, assumes an open discussion, which might even be polemical, between those who agree on this general line of research (just as every confrontation with artists radically foreign to these preoccupations is a matter for a mere literary journal).

I appreciate your rigor in regard to the editorial board, if you fear responsibility for endorsing ideologies that you do not approve. I hope that you express yourself with complete freedom. This will certainly help the really experimental faction in the SI.

Best wishes to you and Nelly,

Guy

To Frankin¹

8 August

Dear Frankin,

The dream continues. The very relative popular mobilization of May (in the antifascist committees) dissolved completely in just a few weeks.

The “thinkers” of the Left said that everything must be radically rethought, and never has their thought been more banal.

As you say: apart from them, nothing. But you have

1. André Frankin, member of the Lettrist International, then a Belgian Situationist belonging to no section.

to see them. The other evening I intervened at length at the Youth Liaison Action Committee (!) which is so lauded by the lunatics from *14-Juillet*.² They have some good intentions there, largely from the Youth Hostel movement, which formed this committee the day after May 28th, thinking the battle was imminent. But several thinkers from *Socialisme ou Barbarie* disarmed everyone by teaching their pure science and, from meeting to meeting, were assured “demystifying” authority, this job being directed solely against the workers’ organizations.

The entire discussion was just a polemic between the members of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* and me, because they seemed to be afraid I’d only come to dethrone them, and reign thereafter in their place over the innocents. To discredit me they insinuated 20 or 30 times that I was mandated by some party to tarnish them (they have a certain tendency toward grandiosity). They even acted as though they thought that I was threatening to sabotage the meeting! (I was accompanied by two Algerian comrades.)

They would be reassuring if they weren’t idiots. Fascism? Scientifically impossible. The end of bourgeois democracy? A negligible detail for the revolutionary struggle. The collapse of the left? Good thing, the French workers have consciously renounced the parties and unions that were their enemies, and are going to attain the magnificent spontaneity of the wildcat strikes of the American proletariat! But the Algerian war is blithely put in parentheses, to make this exultant comparison. If de Gaulle does not stop it, the Great Powers will force him to.

Here I advanced your idea about the interest that the Iraqi revolution might have for the Algerian system, infinitely more adapted to our period of colonial revolution than the Hussein-Nouri Saïd anachronisms, and to

2. *Le 14 Juillet*, journal created by Dionys Mascolo and Jean Schuster in opposition to De Gaulle’s seizure of power on May 13th, 1958.

dependable oil reserves in the Sahara. Oil gushing in the middle of the room would not have been more surprising.

These people are mechanistic to a frightening extent. About as un-Marxist as it is possible to get: workerists. This even runs to religious thinking: the proletariat is their Hidden God. Its ways are mysterious, and the intellectuals must abase themselves and wait. Then how could they admit that the house is on fire?

Send me what you can *by September 7th* at the latest. I am particularly looking for a chapter on the theme “leisure and revolution.” If it is not ready, we can insert a half-chapter to be continued in issue 3.

Fraternally,

Guy

To Jorn

20 August

For Asger,

I found the issue of *Notizie* here and learned that Pistoï has not held up the agreement that he made with me in Alba in April. As I carried out that discussion *in the name of the group*, Pistoï’s failings naturally affect all of our relations with him.

Pistoï is pursuing certain business with you; and despite the importance of other financial matters that he needs to settle with Pinot, he has clearly shown in several telephone conversations that he will only come to Alba if he can see you *at the same time*.

Pinot told me that Pistoï does not believe the Situationist group is real, but sees it only as a number of absolutely autonomous individuals, with very different characters, liable to following very distinct paths. Under these conditions, it is naturally easier for him to talk to you, because of your “comprehension,” than with me, because of my “hardness.”

I find this state of things extremely regrettable; and it would be great if Pinot and you both began contemplating how to remedy the situation without delay.

August 21st

I add that yesterday in Albisola I learned that Pistoï, in a letter sent three days previously, is demanding an additional fee of 100,000 lire from you, because the “book is longer than expected.” This is obviously not over! It must be remarked that the corrections that Pistoï brings to his engagements are *always the same*: he wants to pay less than he should; he wants to obtain more. None of this is very serious, it’s still easy to settle. But you should be careful not to let people treat all of us like imbeciles *separately* and then collectively.

Letters left for Jorn in Alba.

Deposition
Guy Debord

[Alba] 21 August 1958

IMPASSE DE CLAIRVAUX: THE MEETING AT THE SUMMIT
OF THE TERMS OF THE WALDEN INVERSION
(*Vicolo di Clairvaux: L'incontro al vertice dei termini
dell'inversione di Walden*)

Industrial Painting 3 meters 20
(oil resin)

*W il grande e geniale compagno Pinot Gallizio!*¹

Debord came to Alba August 16th, for a meeting with the Italian section and Asger Jorn. They saw a *Teremino-fono* but not Asger Jorn. August 20th Debord advanced his research to Albisola. No Success. The same day Pinot Gallizio painted the canvas described above, and learned that Jorn was continuing the *dérive* begun fifteen days previously on toward Munich.

Pinot Gallizio and Debord examined Old Pistoï's case, and found it poor.

August 21st Debord left for Paris.

Stamped by the Experimental
Laboratory of Alba

1. "Long live the great and
kind comrade Pinot Gallizio!"

G.-E. Debord, Pinot Gallizio

To Gallizio

[Paris] Saturday [August 23rd]

Dear Pinot, *G. e N.A.*,

I arrived. Everything fine. Nothing new.

I await news from you.

Our best to Asger: the attached article is for him.

Kind regards to both you and Donna Augusta,

Guy

To Jorn

25 August 1958

Dear Asger,

I learned today that your English buyer has *still not sent Dragor the 100,000 francs* promised for the first week of August. This is very awkward for our relations with Dragor. I think that you need to write to England immediately to impress the urgency of this upon him.

On top of settling the business with Pistoï, whom you should now regard again in a more favorable light as far as our interests are concerned, I note a little detail that interests me: when Pistoï has used the images that I brought him in Turin, I would like the *three images* that I *marked with a red cross on the back* to be returned to me.

Today I sent 15 journals to Pinot. I expect to receive news of your negotiations. And I hope to see you here around September 1st.

All our best regards to you and Pinot.

Guy

P.S. Today, before dawn, the FLN unleashed terrorism in France. This appears to be a desperate reaction. Everything that should be done here (exhibition, etc.) should be done fast.

To Donna Augusta Rivabella-Gallizio

Paris, 8 September 1958

A “certificate” on *Internationale Situationniste* letterhead. Stamped for the French section of the SI.

Donna Augusta Rivabella is confirmed in the capacity of administrative secretary of the ISSI Experimental Laboratory.¹

1. ISSI, the Italian Section of the Situationist International.

G.-E. Debord, Pinot Gallizio

To Donna Augusta Rivabella-Gallizio

Paris, 11 September 1958

Cara donna Augusta,

The unfavorable political evolution in France, the ever more pronounced hostility of Drouin’s cultural milieu against all Situationist ideas, has caused so many little problems around the projected show for the movement that, in short, Jorn and I went to tell Drouin that the project must be completely abandoned.

Drouin reacted violently—as we were assured he would—protesting that he was absolutely in favor of doing a show of Pinot’s industrial painting. He has found an excellent formula, that suits us perfectly: to cover the *entire* gallery (the walls, the ceiling, the floor) with 200 meters of painting. This without theoretical commentary. The effect will evidently be great, and Drouin will know how to best use it. At the same time, we must try to exploit this success ideologically in the journal.

This show could be done as soon as Pinot wants,

which is to say from the moment that he can complete all this work. It should in any case be done before Christmas.

You will certainly agree with us that the importance of obtaining a victorious outcome to this whole business with Drouin (despite the presently unfavorable conditions), the objective importance of this *demonstration* of the possibilities of industrial painting, is worth new sacrifices, which should be profitable shortly.

Best regards to you and Giors,

Guy

P.S. I received that text from Giors and Glauco.¹ Thanks.

1. An extract from this study on industrial painting appears in *Internationale Situationniste* n° 2.

To Niels

23 September 58

Dear Sir,

I think that Jorn left only yesterday, after having encountered still more obligations at the last moment than he expected.

He asked me to deliver four paintings that he finished to you, in relation to our business together.

These paintings are: one 15F, one 25F, and two 60F.

You can absolutely count on their delivery, as soon as they are dry, and in any case before October 15th.

Sincerely,

G.-E. Debord

To Constant

25 September 1958

Dear Constant,

It goes without saying that the freedom of discussion that I already guaranteed between us (in the SI journal) allows for every attack, as direct as necessary, against Jorn's concepts—or anyone else's. Jorn, with whom I have already discussed the essence of your letter, is himself naturally in agreement with this principle.

Yesterday I sent you *Pour la forme*, which just left the binder. Therein are other theses from Jorn that you have been hitherto unaware of. However, I insist on the fact that this collection is devoted to the fleeting experiment of the Imaginist Bauhaus (as the foreword makes clear), and not to the objectives that we are now trying to attain.

I am also sending you some notes in response to certain points among the remarks with which you opened the discussion.

Therefore, if you have the time, do you want to write the critical article that you already spoke to me about? The final deadline has been pushed back to the beginning of October. Or else we could publish together, as an exchange of correspondence, the two elements of the discussion that are already written—and to which you can add still another response, of whatever length seems appropriate to you. I think that making public a debate on this central topic is as good for the present Situationists as for those on the outside who are presently interested in our common positions.

You will see Asger pop up in Amsterdam any moment now, but so as to discuss an entirely different topic. Be

that as it may I hope to have a response from you soon,
and the pleasure of seeing you. Our best to Nelly,

Guy

A response to Constant's letter¹ opening the debate on
Jorn's ideas.

No painting is defensible from a Situationist point of
view. This type of problem is no longer relevant. The
most that we can say is that a given painting is applicable
to this or that construction. We need to look beyond
divided expressions, even beyond all spectacle (as complex
as this can become).

Obviously, with the reality of present-day culture
the only starting point for our activity, we run the risk
of confusion, compromise and failure. If the artistic
present does manage to make some of its values prevail
within the SI, the true cultural experiences of the period
will be undertaken elsewhere.

It is true that each of the two oppositional terms, pic-
torial individualist primitivism and cold architecture, are to
be equally disdained. The real contradictions are not there.

All art that wants to cling to an outmoded artisanal
freedom is lost in advance (Jorn emphasized this reac-
tionary aspect in the Bauhaus somewhere). In the future,
a free art will be an art that dominates and employs all
the new techniques of conditioning. Outside of this
perspective there is only the artificially revived slavery of
the past, and business.

We are apparently all in agreement on the positive
role of industry. It is the material development of this day

1. See "On Our Means and
Perspectives," *Internationale
Situationniste* n° 2.

and age which has created the general crisis in culture, and the possibility of its reversal in a unitary construction of practical life.

We approve of the formula: “Those who despise the machine and those who glory in it show the same incapacity to utilize it.” But we add: “And to transform it.” A dialectical relationship needs to be recognized. The construction of ambiances is not just the application of an artistic standard made possible by technological progress onto everyday existence; it is also a qualitative change in life likely to entail a permanent conversion of technological means.

Gilles Ivain’s² propositions do not on any point run counter to these considerations on modern industrial production. They are, on the contrary, fashioned on this historical basis. If they are fanciful, they are to the extent that we do not concretely possess the technical means today (viz. to the extent that no form of social organization is yet capable of making an experimental “artistic” use of these means)—not because these means do not exist or because we don’t know about them. In this sense, I believe in the revolutionary value of such momentarily utopian demands.

The failure of the Cobra movement, as well as its posthumous favor among a certain public, is explained by the phrase “so-called experimental art.” Cobra believed that it was enough to have good intentions and the slogan of experimental art. But in fact it is at the moment when one discovers such a slogan that the difficulties begin: what might the experimental art of our era be and how can we make it?

The most effective experiments have tended toward a unitary habitat, not isolated and static but in liaison with transitory unities of behavior.

2. Gilles Ivain, the pseudonyme of Ivan Chtcheglov, a member of the Lettrist International, author of the “Formulary for a New Urbanism” (October 1953); Situationist from afar.

To Gallizio

27 September 1958

Carissimo Pinot, G. e N.A.,

You did well to sever contact with Milan. Let some time pass in Italy, and act elsewhere more forcefully.

Asger spoke to me about your meeting with Matie.¹ He is very aware of your efforts but the results have confirmed him in his resolution, because he thinks he cannot accept a reconciliation on this basis. You yourself have explained to me how serious this crisis is for Asger: as long as it lasts, he will require his friends to show particular understanding.

The “sentimental expressions” you spoke to me about don’t appear in the least bit strange. Asger’s troubles have affected me greatly.

On another topic, I don’t think that any show, at Drouin or elsewhere, is important enough for you to put your health at risk. You should first of all take it easy, as long as necessary. And then we will see for which dates you can undertake the commissions, and finish them.

October 10th, Michèle is opening a kind of café called *La Méthode* on the rue Descartes. If the *tereminofono* could be introduced there (after you have recorded the acoustic background for Drouin?) it will have a great effect.

Asger left Monday for Belgium and Holland. The world tour begins.

The 2nd issue of the journal should appear around November 15th. The financial expenditures are, in principle, almost covered: all that remains is for me to get the money that Mr. Augustinci owes and that he has promised.

1. Matie van Domselaer, Constant’s ex-wife, then Jorn’s.

Wyckaert wrote to me from Belgium that there are new people interested in our activities. They are going to come to Paris soon. I have also had other contacts.

But de Gaulle will be crowned tomorrow. Then we will see the rhythm at which the future can evolve.

Best regards to you all,

Guy

P.S. Since Pistoï claims that he distributed the journal, as Donna Augusta wrote me, it is no longer necessary to make additional complaints to him.

To Constant

3 October 1958

Dear Constant,

OK. Send your response to the discussion as early as possible.

I will pass through Amsterdam, and therefore through your place, around the 15th. I will let you know the exact date I'm coming.

Forgive me for being so brief today. See you soon.

Regards,

Guy

To Straram¹

3 October 1958

1) The theoretical objectives of the SI are to construct situations. At least, to this end, to build some ambiances—or fragments of ambiances—to experiment with transitory behaviors.

To the extent that a notable development of realizations of this kind won't take place without links to the social and political climate and will even need to exist (cf. unitary urbanism) in relation to liberating socioeconomic upheavals, we have recognized, since the beginning of 1958, new reasons for delay.

The historical appraisals of my *Report* (on the basis of the rough sketches of revolution that occurred in 1956) should be corrected in a more pessimistic sense. The rapid cessation of the destalinization of the USSR, the immobilization of the Polish revolution, the passage of China into the camp of Communist dogmatism, the inability of the French proletariat to help the insurgent Algerians in in any way at all and, consequently, the collapse of bourgeois democracy in France, all signal the reactionary phase that we have now entered. There are grounds for suspecting that, for a relatively long time, the revolutionary camp will again be in abeyance, and that dictatorship is extending itself as the form of government of the "free world," beginning with Europe.

Under these conditions, we foresee a longer period of (pre-Situationist) transition. This will allow expression a greater role than we had earlier envisioned.

2) Our essential objective practices are propaganda (the theoretical development of our positions, publicity for this theory) and the gathering in unified action—of

1. Patrick Straram, Canadian, joined the Lettrist International in 1953. He quit in 1954 out of solidarity with Gilles Ivain, who had been expelled.

a new kind—of those who have found, in different advanced sectors of modern culture, the same objective problem, i.e. the same impasse, and often the same first steps toward a solution (this theory and this gathering being inseparable from an extension of experiments in practice). To reach this superior cultural creation—what we call the Situationist game—we now think it is necessary to be an active force in the actual sphere of this era's culture (and not on the fringes of it, as we cheerfully were in 1952–53). This real action is not devoid of risks: the ideological and material powers of artistic commerce might in the end win and dissolve us. Nevertheless we have had to renounce the pure (inactive) extremism that Wolman and I represented in 1952, in reaction against Lettrism's confused thinking under Isou, and which Wolman has maintained to the end, in a phase following the Lettrist International.

3) The case of the French section of the SI.

First off, let's say that this administrative division into national sections was adopted at the Cosio d'Arroscia conference only under the pressure of the right wing of the Italian section, which wanted to retain a certain autonomy. Since then, these problems have been settled. The general tendency is toward centralization. However, the Situationist sections are still very inactive in Germany and in Scandinavia; an absolute phantom obviously in Algeria (where Dahou is). The French section, itself cosmopolitan, has to date served as our center (geographically, French is our only common language) and began publishing our journal. At present the political conditions here already pose the problem of transferring the journal to Belgium or Italy (police surveillance going as far as wire-tapping, and which may well get much worse when issue 2 is published, in November I think).

4) It would be rather unrealistic to define the current positions of the SI for you without envisioning our attitude toward the “minority of 1954.” I think that our opposition at that time, even if it was aggravated by subjective interpretations, rested on real differences. But it seems to me that what has since transpired has shown that those differences over what are today outmoded points were less important than the positive value of conceptions that we formed, together, toward 1953–54. This is my conclusion. If you, and Gilles Ivain, with whom I lost all contact several years ago, think you have advanced since then in a direction that is not alien to our common positions of those years and to the general style of SI research, I would be happy for our dialogue to reopen.

Your move,

Guy

Guy Debord

1, impasse de Clairvaux, Paris 3rd
TURbigo 25 24

To Gallizio

7 October

Carissimo Pinot, Grandissimo e Nobilissimo Amico,

It's killing me. I am exhausted by the urgent tasks.

I cannot write more.

Yes, the article from Giors is good.

And Drouin, what is to be done?

La Méthode opens Friday! Publicity attached.
Sincerely,

Guy

P.S. At the next referendum de Gaulle is expecting
120% Yes.

The Situationists will say NO.

To Niels

9 October 58

Dear Sir,

Just as I was about to send you the green 60F canvas by Jorn directly, I began to be inundated by letters and telephone calls from Mr Augustinci who absolutely insisted on sending the canvas himself.

His principal argument was the necessity of attaching his bill to the painting so that the exportation could be authoritative, and for his accounting purposes.

In the end I gave him the canvas, before marking the back with the statement "Property of Albert Niels" following the instructions of your first letter, against a receipt dated October 7th specifying that this painting was your property and that Mr. Augustinci had been hired by you to send it to you.

Yours faithfully,

G.-E. Debord

To Gallizio

Friday [10 October]

Dear Pinot, *G. e N.A.*,

I am extremely tired. Life these last few weeks has been exhausting.

Asger? I have had no news. In theory, he should be in Denmark. But I'm not sure. Don't worry.

Korun wrote me that he was coming to Paris.

Your project for Drouin sounds splendid to me. I think it better that you write directly to Drouin to bring him up to date on your work, and to ask him for the photo. This will further involve him in the show's preparation.

See, by the attached drawing,¹ that industrial painting already haunts the Parisian artistic milieu. So far, it's the best thing at *La Méthode*.

Best wishes to you both,

Guy

Letter written on the back of a flyer: "Florence, the idol of the New Wave, after ruining three clubs in eighteen months: *Le Moineau-Bistro*, *Le Manouche*, *Le Mont-Blanc*, is now attacking *La Méthode*, 2 rue Descartes. Get a drink there quick before time is called for good" [cf. Guy Debord, *Oeuvres* (Gallimard, 2006) pg. 367–69)].

1. A caricature by Maurice Henry.

To Gallizio

11 October

Carissimo Pinot, G. e N.A.,

I received a letter from Asger, who was still in England. It seems that your two last visits to Albisola helped Matie to increase her hostilities against Asger. She writes to him, now, referring to you as "your so-called friend."

So I think that your good intentions have carried you too far, and that you should reassure Asger and adopt a cold clear-headedness toward Matie.

Best regards to Donna Augusta, Giors, and you,

Letter written on the back of an ad: "Florencie sings every evening at *La Méthode*."

Guy

To Jorn

[12 October]

Dear Asger,

The story of the US visa is great. Count on me to use it in the journal.¹

Send me news about Permild and Selandia. Try to get him to finish the work right away. If your trip to Copenhagen can make my own voyage needless that would be very good, because I have a lot to do here, and I should also go see Constant and Sandberg in Amsterdam.

Just yesterday I wrote Pinot a harsh note asking him to use a cold clear-headedness in relations with Matie henceforth, not an ebullient heart which will make him ridiculous, and which harms you. I hope that he is beginning to understand.

Best wishes,

1. See "The Situationists in America," *Internationale Situationniste* n° 2.

Guy

To Constant

12 October

Dear Constant,

I am very pleased to have received your final response for the discussion. I entirely approve of it. Starting with these propositions the SI can go forward, despite the hesitations of its “right wing.”

Unless you write to say that my trip to Amsterdam is necessary immediately (for the new business with Sandberg), I will put off the trip for between the 25th and the 30th of October only, for two reasons:

1) I have a lot to do these days in Paris.

2) Asger wrote to me from London—yesterday—that he is going to pass through Copenhagen before leaving Europe, and I would like to have news from him of our work there before I leave here.

Asger also wrote that he was denied a US visa (even though he had been invited, by the cultural attaché from the embassy in London) because he refused to swear that he had never been a member of the communist party. In response, he wrote them to ask that they take down a painting of his that was being shown in Pittsburgh, which seems to me to be a very good attitude.

See you soon. My regards to Nelly and Victor.¹

Guy

P.S. Count on me for the sprig of thyme.

1. Constant's son.

To Gallizio

14 October

Cry victory, great and noble friend. Since yesterday the industrial painting hanging in a corner of the room at *La Méthode* (and making a bend following the wall) has faced a difficult public.

It already seems:

- 1) that no one is opposed to the painting,
- 2) that it is perfectly integrated into the ambiance of the place,
- 3) that it reinforces this ambiance in the warm sense that we wanted.

So now I am still more anxious to see the exhibition at Drouin take place. And I also need to know for the journal: Where are we? When will I have the samples to take to Drouin?

I hope to also have, at the same time, the *teremino-fono*. We are now going to experiment with lighting hollow pumpkins, which you recommended that I use.

In the end, it's decisive proof for suitable industrial painting that it's begun to have an effect in a public ambiance (not an exhibition or a museum).

I hope to have good news from you soon.

Accept, *carissimo Pinot*, our best regards,

Guy

P.S. Wyckaert called me: it seems that Korun is once again resolutely with us. So much the better.

Constant is well: he wrote an extremely sound text for the journal.

To Straram

24 October 58

I too think that it is hardly desirable to conduct a serious conversation across an exchange of letters. This method of communication has already negatively affected a debate between us before.

My trip—or Michèle's—through Montréal would suit us perfectly. But the lack of money forestalls this project for the moment. We will see later on how to overcome this contradiction, or if we can get round it by the last resort of writing. My entire last letter was itself only a supplement rectifying certain points made in the publications, you may have come across.

I think it is necessary to point out that despite the different circumstances of our separation, the same reopening of dialogue is possible (neither sought, nor avoided) with Ivan.¹ But the fact that you left together in 1954 obviously does not imply that you've maintained a common position. Generally speaking, I can't say that I know you now. If Ivan is no longer in contact with you, it is probably because he finds himself that much more distant from those things that once brought us together. It is very clear that the limits of all this are in the interest that we may still have reciprocally.

Regards to you,

Guy

P.S. Our publications will be sent to the 3 addresses that you sent.

I. Ivan Chtcheglov (Gilles Ivain).

To Gallizio

[28 October]

A post card featuring the entrance to the École polytechnique.

1. *La Méthode* was located at 2, rue Descartes.

2. Followed by a sketch of a boat sinking.

G. e N.A.,

We are right across the street.¹

And sinking.²

Regards,

Guy, Michèle

To Gallizio

[29 October]

Carissimo Pinot, G. e N.A.,

I have had no news from Asger. I am starting to get a little worried.

What you wrote to me about the difficulties with Matie is distressing.

How is it possible?

Since you prefer it so, I will handle Drouin myself.

As of yesterday we sold our share in *La Méthode* (but I saved the industrial painting). We are thinking of opening another bar!

Our regards to you all,

Guy, Hafid

To Gallizio

[30 October]

G. e N. Amici,

We are saddened by the bad news contained in Pinot's last letter. Here we're also having similar difficulties. But have courage! Michèle is trying to arrange things with Drouin. We'll see.

Asger still hasn't returned.

We are preparing the journal.

What action do you foresee against Pistoï, at least to get the images back?

Best regards to you,

Guy

To Gallizio

3 November

Carissimo Pinot, G. e N.A.,

Pistoï has revealed his true colors!

Attached is a copy of the response that I sent him just now via express.

Henceforth it's war and Giors and Glauco should get ready to slap the stupid thief's face, if he will not give in to initial threats about the images and the painting that he should immediately return.

Once again we have been too good!

Today Michèle is going to see Drouin (I think that it will be more diplomatic).

No news from Asger, which is very frustrating from several perspectives. But you know Asger and his habits: don't panic.

The crash of *La Méthode* is really perturbing the new Parisian intellectual quarter. We are trying to reopen something 20 meters away. I hope to have the *Teremino-fono* then.

There are a lot of Situationist activities at the moment.

I expect to see you soon.

Our best regards to you all,

Guy

To Pistoï

Paris, 3 November 1958

Small-time hoodlum,

Gallizio has passed on your insolent letters to me. I would remind you of a few facts already known to you and which it is extremely imprudent of you to forget.

1) During the month of April, in Alba, you importuned me to allow you to organize an exhibition of industrial painting in Turin. I accepted, in the name of the SI, in exchange for certain services that you agreed to perform for us in the matter of Italian translations, in particular against the promise of making *Notizie* n° 6 a special Situationist issue. You failed miserably to honour

this agreement, without even venturing to let us know about your dodge—and moreover you have been dishonest enough to claim to need reimbursement for some costs for an exhibition from which you sought exclusive rights at any cost.

2) Warned of your attitude during my last trip to Italy, and having finally read *Notizie* n° 6, I let my friends know that collaboration with an individual as suspect as yourself was henceforth impossible under any conditions. Jorn has therefore naturally withdrawn the Italian edition of *Pour la forme* from you.

3) Jorn will pay you, upon his return to Europe, what little money he owes you for the beginning of the translation, or for whatever else.

4) If you do not deliver to Gallizio, as soon as possible, all the images and the Jorn canvas that you are unjustifiably holding, be assured that we will use all the means at our disposal, or which we will have at our disposal in the future, for sanctions against you. These means are not negligible.

G.-E. Debord

To Gallizio

[Amsterdam] Sunday 9 November

Caro Pinot, G. e N.A.,

Michèle saw Drouin. Drouin is demanding the *samples* that you promised him. He said that he won't start any work until he has chosen samples that please him. He

repeats that he has only ever shown paintings that he *likes*. And that he wants to be sure he *likes* those that you place in his gallery. Etc.

In short, this seems to me rather unpleasant and insolent. But it is true that you have agreed to show him some samples, models among which he was to choose. Do you want to send them to me? Or rather, what are your instructions for negotiations with Drouin?

Everything is going fine in Amsterdam.
Has Pistoï sent Jorn's canvas and the images?
Best regards to Donna Augusta, Giors, and you.

Guy

To Jorn

Amsterdam, 12 November 1958

Everything is going well here.

Send as soon as possible the manifesto from the Germans¹ to Paris—as well as the publications they are preparing in general.

Our most friendly and Situationist greetings,

Guy, Constant

1. *Manifest* appeared in Munich in November 1958, marking the meeting between Asger Jorn and the Spur group, who joined the German section of the SI.

To Straram

12 November 58

Dear Patrick,

It seems to me at present that our mutual interests are no longer in doubt. I think I am in agreement with the whole of your letter from October 27th. This being said, I will clarify my thought on some points that are perhaps less clear.

Poetry, yes, but in life. No return possible to Surrealist or earlier poetic writing. Behaviors and their settings.

Expression: yes, in the sense of the total expression of one's self (masked by the common notion of "freedom of expression"), which is to say, to fulfill oneself in actions and *also* through means of communication ... The primary problem of our era is supporting the notion of direct fulfillment, which for the first time in History appears to *take precedence over* a fulfillment limited to artistic "expression" (but doesn't abolish it).

Regarding the transitory phase of expression in the SI, and of what you say of a possible metagraph,¹ there is an effort at a book (presented as my *Mémoires*) that will please you, I think, if I can send it to you soon. Unfortunately, the people who are printing it in Copenhagen are scandalously and worryingly behind schedule.

All the material published by the SI is, in principle, usable by everyone, even without acknowledgement, with no concerns as to literary property. But all the better by you. You can make all the *détournements* that appear useful to you.

The notion of the International is to clarify, in the sense that should be ours. For us, it is already an obviously

1. Lettrist neologism having served to designate a work composed essentially of prefabricated elements.

détourned notion. The problem is really the common action of free individuals, bound only by and for this real creative liberty. Difficult, and not resolved by us. But perhaps we are on the way.

When I spoke of propaganda, this meant making it known that there are certain problems; that certain persons recognize them together; face them in certain directions. Propaganda considered in this way is to accept one's responsibilities, and to call for help to those who want and can be collaborators.

Of course, never any *doctrine*: perspectives. A solidarity around these perspectives.

On the relationship to politics, alas, lucidity necessarily comes first. This is sometimes sentimentally inconvenient. Never mind. Despite the importance of the events that took place in France in May, we have only been able to participate on an individual basis in the impoverished attempts at resistance from the left. To accept an ideological alliance with such or such tendency when it is so poorly directed was unthinkable.

Best to you,

Guy

P.S. In spite of the need to meet so as to arrive at a definitive agreement, we invite—your last letter suggested that it was already possible—you to publish your positions in the Situationist journal, under a pseudonym if you wish (I say this with your “legal” problems in mind), or under your own name. And in this latter case, with or without a note explaining the divergence and overlap of our trajectories over the last four years. All as you wish.

To Boersa

28 November 58

Secretary S.D. Boersa
Kröller Müller Museum
Otterlo, Netherlands

SAVE YOUR NINE FLORINS¹ IMBECILE IT WAS A GIFT!

Debord

Telegram from Paris

1. Nine florins for the article
"10 jaar experimentele kunst:
Jorn en zijn rol in de theoretis-
che inventie" (10 Years of
Experimental Art: Jorn and His
Role in Theoretical Invention)
by Debord, which had just
appeared in *Museumjournaal*,
vol. IV n° 4, Otterlo.

To Gallizio

Friday [28 November]

Carissimo Pinot, G. e N.A.,

Good news: Michèle took your letter to Drouin and, thanks to her keen diplomatic sense, made him *accept your conditions!*

The photo has already been taken. I can have it sent to you Monday.

Drouin asks: when will you bring the material? I think that the exhibition must be for Christmas. If not, it will have to be put back until Spring. And then it probably won't happen.

All the best,

Guy

To Constant

[End of November]

Dear Constant,

Thank you for your letter, and the 6 points on urbanism.¹

I will respond at greater length tomorrow. But I need the texts from *Reflex*² as soon as possible (also, if you can, your guitar-player photo—but this is a little less pressing).

Best to you all,

Guy

1. See the letter to Constant from 8 December 1958.

2. *Reflex*, organ of the Dutch Experimental Group founded in July 1948, whose manifesto was written by Constant.

To Constant

2 December 1958

SEND EXTREMELY URGENT *REFLEX* TRANSLATIONS
EVEN PARTIAL

Telegram from Paris.

Guy

To Constant

Monday [8 December]

Dear Constant,

Here are the proofs of the declaration.¹ Your propositions numbered 1 to 5 are now 5 to 9. The sixth became our third. I framed it with five other propositions.

I received some catalogs from Sandberg's museum, which seems to prove that my quick reaction—by telegram—to the insolence of *Museumjournaal* had a positive effect.

There are several technical difficulties for the journal (the paper for the cover held up at customs, and now no one to unroll it) but I still hope that we can publish at the very end of December.

Best regards to you,

Guy

1. "Declaration from Amsterdam" *Internationale Situationniste* n° 2.

To Constant

9 December

Dear Constant,

I hope that you still plan to visit Italy around Christmas, and that we will see you soon here. You need to come before December 22nd: between that date and the end of the month, the room will be occupied. But I think that date corresponds to the schedule of your trip, if it takes place.

Asger left Munich for Copenhagen. And after a letter from Pinot, the business in Albisola will still be at the same point.¹

Our best to you all,

1. See the letter to Constant of 28 December 1958, below.

Guy

To Melanotte

Tuesday 9 December

My Dear Giors,

Thanks for your letter. Even though I am still very busy with and hurried by the exhausting task of preparing the journal, I am going to respond this time at greater length (besides, the work on the journal is almost over), since it seems that there have been some misunderstandings due to the brevity of the last news that I sent to Alba.

First, Jorn is not in Paris. I just received a *4-line note*, from Munich, in which he announced his departure for Denmark. That's all. I don't know what else he did (particularly with the Spur group), and I don't know where one might contact him, nor when he will come back ...

All the same, I think that, as we know Jorn, there is nothing about his behavior or about the absence of news from him that should surprise or disturb you.

I had the photographs taken as soon as I could. The photographer made me wait a while, but he is a young friend of Drouin's (and I hope that you will find his photographs well done and useful), so it was better for us to use him than someone else. These photographs were sent

to you, I think, last Thursday, so you should certainly have them now.

I understand that it is impossible for you to dry and send so many meters of painting by Christmas. But Christmas is in no way a mandatory date (it is only the earliest date chosen by Drouin).

Here is how to proceed. When everything is dry, send all the industrial painting to Paris if you have the means to do so (for example, between the 15th and 30th of January?). At that time, Michèle, with all the rolls to hand, will have Drouin come and let him see everything at once, then ask him to set a date, the earliest possible, for the show. I think that if the painting is in Paris around January 20th, an exhibition may be foreseeable between February 20th and 28th, for example. (You will have to bring the *Tèremínofono*, the alcohol, and all the other supplementary elements with you, and come several days before the date set for the preview.)

I will clearly set out the two determining factors of which I am now *certain* in this business with Drouin:

1) Drouin is a sworn *enemy of all the Situationists* (including Jorn; and even a bit of an enemy of Pinot, because he knows that Pinot is very solidly attached to the SI.)

2) Drouin is *determined to do the exhibition* of industrial painting (save in the case where the rolls displease him, but I am persuaded that he will be even more enthusiastic with the success that you told me about).

These two contradictory conditions force us to act with a great deal of care, so that this exhibition may take place, and so that we can take advantage of it.

My plan is the following: in the run-up period, Pinot should not bother with any theoretical stance with Drouin, and not seem overly bound to the rest of

the movement. I think that we can count on Michèle's diplomacy.

At the preview, we need to take a theoretical position on our side (by means of a tract for example), and Pinot will have to be the Situationist placed at the forefront of this maneuver, even if it strongly displeases Drouin.

An error in the first part of this plan may well prevent the exhibition. And if we execute the second part poorly we will see industrial painting exploited by Drouin-Tapié and Pistoï, but against us.

At the same time I think that it is easy for us to pull it off correctly.

Let me know about the dates—and the method chosen—to deliver the industrial painting to Paris. And what do you think of my plan?

Best regards to you all,

Guy

1. See *Internationale Situationniste* n° 2.

P.S. I wrote a very long article on "The Activity of the Italian Section" that, I hope, will please you.¹

To Gallizio

17 December 1958

Dear Pinot, *G. e N.A.*,

The news you have of Drouin does not contradict the terms of my recent letter to Giors.

You can reread that letter. I said and I repeat with certitude:

A) Drouin is a sworn enemy of all that is "Situationist."

B) Drouin is determined to do your show.

It is also true that Drouin has real sympathy for you (and not for your friends). But don't be taken in by that sympathy. It is at the same time a maneuver. Drouin wants to show your painting, but in order to isolate you, to present it at as he wishes. I advise you, then, not to bother with any kind of theory with Drouin, nor reference to the SI—at best, exploit Drouin's contradictory intentions to organize the exhibition. The moment it opens we can, I hope, commit ourselves publicly and freely to industrial painting; to explain it once again according to our ideas. This nevertheless will only be able to be done if we maintain some secrecy about our intention in this regard.

But to now have confidence in Drouin and treat him as a friend can only lead to the same result as with Pistoï.

I hope that you have reached an agreement about a not-too-distant date. We will undoubtedly have an initial print run of the journal at the end of next week. Asger should be in Copenhagen? But no news.

Please show this letter to Donna Augusta and to Giors, because we certainly will need to talk about all this again one day, and I consider my opinion definitive (on points A and B); everything that follows will be directed by these two inseparable truths.

Our regards to all of you,

Guy

To Gallizio

[27 December]

*Migliori auguri per 1959*¹

Carissimo Pinot, G. e N.A.,

I saw Asger three days ago, on his way to Italy. So you are going to see him shortly.

I think that he will give you the best advice about Drouin. We are of the same opinion, more or less.

The whole story comes down to this: Drouin should receive the painting here as soon as possible. And therefore the exhibition should take place quickly. At that time we will see how to exploit it to our benefit. In the meantime a clash must be avoided between Drouin and us, which in the end means between Drouin and you (hence your absence from the editorial board of the journal,² though we discuss your painting a great deal, without making you responsible, yourself, for what we say and the theories that we formulate around it).

You are going to receive the journal in a day or two, but we have very few copies of this initial print run.

Best regards to you all,

1. "Best wishes for 1959"

2. *Internationale Situationniste*
n° 2.

Guy

To Constant

28 December 1958

Dear Constant,

I hope you have got over your bout of flu.

Thanks for the mock-up, which is very beautiful (for issue n° 3 of the journal).

I agree on the interpretation of point 10. Your constructions head in the direction of creating a setting for a microambiance and, at the same time, are models for new architecture. This differentiation is only a question of proportion, of scale. Which is to say that we are rediscovering the profound unity of the problems of limited ambiance and of urbanism.

I hope you like the journal.¹ You will receive 3 copies in a day or two. We only received a small portion of the print run in the time frame we had hoped for. Copies are therefore very rare at the moment (but the review copies have been sent out as normal).

I saw Jorn, last Tuesday, between trains. He was going to Albisola. So there is a chance that the family crisis has sorted itself out.

Also, I am going to Cannes—for a month or so.

Naturally, if you go to Italy in January, tell Michèle and use the guest room.

I will be at the following address: “San Lorenzo,” avenue de Fiesole, Cannes (A.-M.).

If you were in Albisola on a certain day, set in advance, I could meet you there. It’s not far. But I think that your trip to Albisola might no longer be necessary?

Another thing: by what date will we need the text for your monograph? I would like to send it to you well

1. *Internationale Situationniste*
n° 2.

in advance so that we have time to make changes when you have read it.

Sincerely. And best wishes for 1959, as they say.

Guy

To Frankin

Paris, 28 December

Dear Frankin,

As your letter is rather full of news on various subjects, it calls for several responses.

President De Gaulle and the currency trade are the details of the week. The basis of the problem is the total disappearance of political opposition—or of the *myth* of a workers' opposition. In this case, even the disappearance of a myth can be a real defeat (necessary or not for a subsequent advance). If the left has become aware of the extreme and ridiculous impotence that it has attained beneath the impressive façade of its bureaucratic organizations, *its adversaries are equally aware*. Previously—as strange as this may seem to us—most of the active reactionaries saw the PCF as a dangerous revolutionary force. The strength of the FLN alone must not be overestimated as political opposition to the new French regime (what Mascolo calls “the Algerian party”). Without even mentioning the *intentions* of the FLN, its *means* have shown their limits in the unfortunate campaign of terrorism at home (and, up to a certain point, militarily in Algeria in the sabotage of the referendum and of the elections).

There seems to be no immediate impetus in these conditions for an overt clash between the sovereign capitalist reaction and its enemies on the right (i.e., Algerian Poujado-Military fascism). The fascist threat in the short term has withdrawn. But the possibility of a final clash with the workers' organizations has for the moment disappeared. We are going to watch the relatively rapid evolution of the new regime toward extreme or fascistic authoritarianism, first in all the institutions (cf. the new laws about the "protection" of the prestige of the judicial authorities), and through the action of the UNR,¹ which will certainly organize itself into a popular party.

So it's clear that the most likely perspective for Algeria, the one that everyone—including the FLN—accepts at this moment, is a prolongation of the war for a certain number of years.

Your favorable remarks about Kateb Yacine somewhat surprised me. I don't know him personally. Algerian friends who know him a little have spoken to me about him as the epitome of an unpleasant literary hack.² I would be inclined to blame him for giving us a manifestly sub-René Char poetic prose, re-enhanced only by an *exoticism* designed to please the useless intellectuals of the left in these war years. But I know nothing of the positive sides of Kateb. I will try to take them into account.

I don't know if one can qualify the novelistic concepts of C. Frère³ as "French." France has so many faults, let's not add more. I have not yet read C. Frère but given his statements, I think that his idea of the novel, of writing in general, is the expression—which should reveal a "talent"—of the small personal tastes that one might have. In fact, the people who want to show, with or without talent, the beauty, or ugliness, of their immortal

1. UNR, *Union pour la Nouvelle République*, a Gaullist political party.

2. See Abdelhafid Khatib, "The Expression of the Algerian Revolution and the Impostor Kateb Yacine," *Potlatch* n° 27 (2 November 1956).

3. Claude Frère, a sociologist and novelist.

soul—or who would deserve to be so endowed—are to me, to say the least, perfectly indifferent. I am not hostile to them. I perceive the nuance of their work the same way I can say that I know how to play chess. But I have never given any great attention to this game, which is difficult, like these literary objectives, which are not *French*, but truly planetary to the extent that bourgeois civilization, up to the present, has created an unprecedented cultural unity of the world. I am a poor judge, then, and even a poor observer of such exercises.

Who is H. Broch?⁴

Glissant?⁵ I met him once. He seemed very nice. But he hardly spoke. I admit that he can be disappointing when he speaks. In French literary sociology, he probably plays a role similar to Kateb's (the colonized individual who introduces his own values into the literature of his exploiters). But the bad conscience of the intellectuals on the left is less *impressionable* for a West Indian: there is no armed uprising in the West Indies.

Leisure, it's true: everyone is beginning to speak of abundance (it was distinctly more original four or five years ago). But note: the use of the idea of leisure, *as an already dominant feature in capitalist society*, is reformist rubbish or "public relations" for neocapitalism. On the contrary, for us, the real perspectives of leisure absolutely imply prior social revolution.

And it is around these future possibilities for leisure, and certainly *of the use of leisure*, that the proletarian class struggle must recognize, and win, what we have called a "battle for leisure," which is taking place without current revolutionary forces realizing it.

In my opinion, it is even one of the essential points of the complex problem that the future revolutionary movement must resolve in the industrially

4. Hermann Broch, Austrian writer best known for *The Death of Virgil*.

5. Édouard Glissant, Creole writer.

developed countries (the other point being that of organizational form).

Now it is obvious that there would be nothing “rosy” about a civilization of leisure, were this leisure even to be of the most thoroughly “Situationist” kind.⁶ Neither Paradise, nor the end of history. We will have *other misfortunes* (and other pleasures), that’s all.

But, as you say, that’s no reason to just sit around. We’ll see in 1959. Best regards,

G.-E. Debord

P.S. N. Arnaud⁷ is a pataphysician. Regrettable.

6. “Rose” is the symbolic color of the French socialist party.

7. Noël Arnaud, founder with Dotremont of the group of Revolutionary-Surrealists in 1947. (Pataphysics is Alfred Jarry’s science of imaginary solutions, a science devoted to contradictions and exceptions beyond the realm of metaphysics. On November 18, 1958, Arnaud moderated the “Cercle Ouvert” debate on the question “Is Surrealism Dead or Living,” in which Debord participated. Debord’s lecture was presented via a tape recorder accompanied by someone playing a guitar. The text and an account of the evening can be found in *Internationale Situationniste* n° 2.)

To Arnaud¹

28 December 1958

Dear Friend,

Thank you for your wishes. Accept mine, foremost for your complete recovery.

I would very much like to meet you.

Unfortunately I am leaving Paris tomorrow for about a month. I will let you know when I have returned.

Yours,

G.-E. Debord

1. Noël Arnaud.

1959

1959

February

—Expulsion of Hans Platschek from the German section.

March

—The Dutch section adopts a *Résolution contre la restauration de la Bourse d'Amsterdam*—a renovation demanded by a consensus of opinion in the art world—proposing instead “the demolition of the Stock Exchange and the redevelopment of the land as a playground for the area’s population ... the center of Amsterdam is not a museum, but a place inhabited by living beings.”

April

6—Debord begins filming *On the Passage of a Few People through a Rather Brief Moment in Time*.

15 April–8 May—“1 meter of art for 40 to 70 Marks,” the slogan for Giuseppe Pinot Gallizio’s industrial painting show at the Van de Loo Gallery in Munich.

17–20—Third Conference of the SI in Munich. Participants: Armando, Constant, G.-E. Debord, Erwin Eisch, Heinz Höfl, Asger Jorn, Giors Melanotte, Har Oudejans, Giuseppe Pinot Gallizio, Heimrad Prem, Gretel Stadler, Helmut Sturm, Maurice Wyckaert, and Hans-Peter Zimmer.

Foundation in Amsterdam of the Unitary Urbanism Bureau of Research. Constant, director.

Potlatch becomes the bulletin for internal liaison under the responsibility of the Dutch section.

Adoption of the “Amsterdam Declaration.”

The tract *Ein kultureller Putsch während Ihr schlaft!* (“A Cultural Putsch While You Were Sleeping!”), signed by Constant, Debord, Jorn, Pinot Gallizio, Wyckaert, and Zimmer for the Dutch, French, Danish, Italian, Belgian, and German sections, is distributed on the morning of the 21st with an invitation to Professor Bense’s tape-recorded pseudo-press conference.

—Tape-recorded lecture by the Dutch section at the Architectural Academy in Amsterdam.

May

4—Exhibition of around thirty maquettes for Constant’s spatial constructions at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

6–28—“Modifications,” an exhibition of “some twenty nondescript pictures, partially repainted” by Asger Jorn, at the Rive Gauche Gallery, Paris. Jorn publishes *Détourned Painting* for the occasion.

“This exhibition, which proposed to ‘demonstrate that painting’s preferred sustenance is painting,’ was a clear-cut illustration of situationist theses on *détournement* [diversion], in our opinion the essential mode of action in a transitional culture” (*Potlatch* #30).

13—Giuseppe Pinot Gallizio covers the walls, ceiling, and floor of the Drouin Gallery in Paris to construct a “cavern of antimatter” out of 145 meters of rolled industrial painting.

“Unfortunately, the poor presentation of this ‘attempt at the construction of an ambiance’ prevented the efficacious application of industrial painting already seen in Italy and Germany” (*Potlatch* #30).

—*Constant*, first monograph published by the Bibliothèque d’Alexandrie, Paris.

June

—Tape-recorded lecture by the Dutch section at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

July

15—*Potlatch* n° 30, Internal bulletin of the Situationist International, new series, n° 1, Amsterdam.

August

—Article by Constant on the unification of the arts, their integration in everyday life, and unitary urbanism in *Forum* n° 6, Amsterdam.

—In New York, Alexander Trocchi finishes his novel *Cain’s Book*, which will be published 25 April 1960.

September

18 September–25 October—Exhibition of collages, ceramics, drawings, and graphics by Jorn, Van de Loo Gallery, Essen.

—Editing of *On the Passage of a Few People through a Rather Brief Moment in Time* by Guy Debord. Short feature (20 minutes), 35 mm, black and white. Produced by the Dansk-Fransk Experimentalfilms Kompagni; G.T.C. Laboratory. Camera: André Mrugalski; Editing: Chantal Delattre; Assistant Director: Ghislain de Marbaix; Assistant Cameraman: Jean Harnois; Script: Michèle Vallon; Grip: Bernard Largemain; Music: Georg Friedrich Handel, *The Origin of Drawing*, Michel Richard Delalande, *Caprice* n° 2; Voices: Jean Harnois, Guy Debord, Claude Brabant.

October

—Manifesto for industrial painting, *Per un'arte unitaria applicabile*, by Pinot Gallizio, in the journal *Notizie: arti figurative* n° 9, Turin.

November

5—Launch, at the Statsguymnasium in Århus, Denmark, of the ceramic mural (27 meters wide by 3 meters high) that Jorn made over the summer in Albisola, Italy.

—*Difendiamo la libertà* (In Defense of Freedom), tract by Pinot Gallizio, Eisch, Fischer, Nele, Prem, Sturm, and Zimmer advocating public loathing of the Spanish painter Cuixard, who, in order to increase his chances of securing the Grand Prize for painting at São Paulo, did not hesitate to denounce the communism of his compatriots Saura and Tapiés, at the risk of exposing them to “considerable problems with their country’s police organizations.”

December

—*Internationale Situationniste* n° 3, Central Bulletin published by the sections of the Situationist International. Director: G.-E. Debord. Editorial Board: Constant, Asger Jorn, Helmut Sturm, Maurice Wyckaert (resignation of Mohamed Dahou from the Algerian section). The concept of the spectacle appears for the first time in the article “Cinema after Alain Resnais.”

31—First screening of the film *On the Passage of a Few People through a Rather Brief Moment in Time*, Paris.

To Constant

[Cannes] 9 January

Dear Constant,

You will receive the text before the end of January.

Yes, the journal was sent to Sandberg. And I don't know what happened to the rest of the run with our printer, who is getting worse and worse.

Jorn seems to be in Italy still. So I hope that you come to Paris when I return—that is, near February 1st.

See you soon. Regards,

Guy

To Gallizio

22 January 1959

Carissimo Pinot, G. e N.A.,

I arrived in Paris today and found your five consecutive letters together!

I'm sorry, but I have been in Cannes since December 29th, as I told you, and Michèle, who was at her parents' outside Paris, did not forward your letters.

So, *I am writing as a matter of urgency to reassure you.* And forgive me for this disconcerting but unintentional silence.

Here is the most urgent answer:

Drouin, as *I wrote you more than a month ago* now is

in agreement. There is nothing more to ask of him. Send all of the paintings to Paris as quickly as possible. It is still possible (but very improbable) that he will refuse at the last moment, but it is useless and dangerous to ask him any more questions. He has accepted. *Antimondo*¹ must be given to him *as soon as possible*. There is no other means of settling this business. Do it as quickly as you can: right now the rue Visconti is superb because it's closed-off at one end by a construction of scaffoldings in planks that we can cover with posters and various objects. Complete everything for *the Drouin gallery*. If we have to do the exhibition at Augustinci or elsewhere, not only the floor but the ceiling and the dimension of the walls will be *different*. Which is to say that there is no reason to delay the completion of *Antimondo* to scale for the Drouin gallery.

Asger: He is in Paris, but I haven't seen him yet.

Our journal: *I don't understand*. I sent you 3 copies the day I left Paris (29 December). But I did not send you *any communist journal*.

I think everything will go well here. I have to see Asger and answer quite a few letters I found here (many favorable reactions to the second issue of the journal).

I agree with your idea of expanding, if possible, our "Munich conference" to the Eastern countries.

Write me quickly. Warm regards to you, Donna Augusta, Giors, Glauco, etc.

Letter sent express.

1. "Antimatter."

Guy

To Donna Augusta

Monday 26 January, Morning

Dear Donna Augusta,

The moment I began to answer to your letter, which arrived only yesterday evening, I found Pinot's letter, sent from Alba on Saturday. So this mishap is over.

I am very sorry to have caused Pinot concern. I am almost certain that I told Pinot, in a letter at the end of December, that I was leaving Paris for 3 weeks. But in any case, I told Jorn, the day before Christmas, when he passed through Paris, and right as he was going to Alba! He must have forgotten to mention it to you.

For the journal: all the review copies were sent out December 29th. A package of 3 copies for the Experimental Laboratory has been lost—perhaps once again through malicious intent at the border?—and this is frustrating because our printer is bankrupt, and we received only a portion of the usual print run. Today I am sending a copy *in a sealed letter*.

For Drouin, I am pleased to hear that all the work will be sent February 15th. I will inform him accordingly and recommend he set the exhibition for the end of March (because of Munich). I think it is best to send everything *directly to Drouin*. When he has the painting, we will give him to understand that he should set the earliest date possible for the exhibition, or else return it to us. Thus Drouin will have direct contact with Pinot; and for the “negotiations” here we will use Michèle, who is less compromised than Jorn or I by Situationist ideas, now dangerous at rue Visconti.

I think that we will manage to stage a very important exhibition.

Best regards to you, Pinot, and Giors,

Guy

To Constant

Monday 26 January

Dear Constant,

I just got back to Paris, and I hope that you will be coming very soon. Immediately even, if you want; the weather isn't too harsh.

I am going to send you my introduction very shortly.¹ For the specification and the layout, you can already take into account a 4-page text, in a standard typeset.

I am in complete agreement with what you propose for the realization of unitary urbanism (excepting the possible use of the Imaginist Bauhaus label, which seems definitively compromised to me). At least, a portion—or the preliminaries—of a work of this kind needs to be in n° 3 of the *I.S.* journal.

But I see the interest in proceeding on a larger scale—for example a special 120-page issue of the journal. Here I am thinking that there might be a possibility, if I can go by what Asger says, of obtaining an entire issue of the Belgian journal *Architecture*.

But, of course, the most interesting development is in the area of town planning departments—should there be one unregulated enough to temporarily support what we

1. "Constant and the Path of Unitary Urbanism."

are trying to do. This is in fact the kind of thing that I am expecting from the great radiophonic *dérive* in Amsterdam, if Sandberg makes it possible for us: to simultaneously make visible a kind of game, as well as theoretical publications (accompanied by maps and models) to articulate the unity in question.

We could study 2 urban projects:

1) an experimental city of the future, fully realized with a model.

2) an experimental quarter to be integrated into some specifically designated city. These model constructions then have to be accompanied by plans for the relations between the new quarter and the urban whole, precisely studied beforehand.

We'll talk about this when you arrive.

See you soon. Sincerely,

Guy

To Gallizio

A pittura industriale
carta *industriale*¹

Parigi, il 2 febbraio 1959

Caro Pinot, G. e N.A.,

I received Giors' letter. Everything is fine. Michèle called Drouin. If he receives the industrial painting by February 15th, he will organize the opening for a date that he will choose himself *sometime in March*.

1. "For industrial painting, industrial paper." The letter is written on the back of an industrial leaflet.

He's aware that the Munich exhibition is taking place afterwards. So, if in March, when he has your painting, he wants to try another maneuver under the pretext of associates who have rights over the direction of his gallery, he will clearly be faced with two alternatives: return all the paintings—and lose everything in the deal—or else put on the exhibition by the end of March. So that the delays and the months lost in uncertainty are finally behind us.

Do send everything by the promised date.

And see you soon in Paris.

Regards to you all,

Guy

P.S. I proposed that we take advantage of your exhibition in Munich—in April—by holding our third international conference there (after those of Cosio and Paris).

What do you think?

To the Spur group

6 February 59

Dear Friends—Spur Group,¹

We have decided to hold the third conference of the Situationist International in Munich—in all likelihood at the same time as the Gallizio exhibition at Van de Loo.² You, the third German wave, are invited to participate in this conference. There you will get to know

1. Letter sent originally in German.

2. Otto Van de Loo, art dealer in Munich and Essen.

people that you haven't met before. We're hoping to have a good time.

Plateschek will not be invited.³ We even cabled him notice of his expulsion on the grounds of his continued involvement with the overtly reactionary *Panderma*⁴ group in Basle. We hope that this necessary severity meets with your approval.

Regards,

G.-E. Debord, Asger Jorn

3. Hans Platschek, signed the first Situationist manifesto in Germany with Jorn.

4. Swiss "Dadaïst-royalist" journal.

To Constant

Saturday [7 February]

Dear Constant,

We are very happy that you are coming next week.

One detail however: I believe that it will be impossible for me to be available on Wednesday; perhaps it would be better to delay your arrival until following day (Thursday February 12th)?

We have a lot of work to consider together. I think that it's pointless for me to send you the text since you are coming. I have been a little behind schedule, mostly by having it typed up properly, which is to say, not by me.

Everything will be ready when you arrive here.

See you very soon. Our regards,

Guy

To Melanotte

10 February 1959

Dear Giors,

I showed your letter to Jorn. He has in fact been in Paris since my own return here—or rather, a little before. I have seen him several times. He spoke enthusiastically of the work accomplished in Alba.

Thank you for the photos, which already offer a certain idea of the ambiance that we are going to have at via Visconti.

One problem though, for Drouin: send it as quick as you can. Let me know the exact day the painting leaves and the probable day that you're told it will be delivered in Paris. After that, we will take care of Drouin. And as soon as he has set the date—still in the month of March—you should prepare for your trip. We are really counting on you coming as well; for one thing, it will certainly be very amusing, but we may also need to be there in numbers!

We have planned several details to add to the glamour of the demonstration.

Assure Pinot that he should not be nervous: Drouin's blessing is guaranteed in advance—if not that of his friends—and what does the judgment of an art dealer, even an “intelligent” one, mean to Pinot Galizio? Industrial painting is beyond that kind of taste and judgment.

Another very important thing. We have scheduled the third international conference of the SI in Munich in April—in time for Pinot's show at Van de Loo. Can you write me quickly with the precise, fixed date for the

opening of that show? I think that you must already know it. If not, quickly write to Van de Loo for the date. We have already sent the invitations, but without yet being able to specify the day of the opening.

Helmut Sturm¹ from the Spur Group is here at the moment. He and his friends have been creating quite a stir in Germany over the past month, with scandals, brawls, and a manifesto in which they proclaimed themselves Situationists.

Hans Platschek, on the other hand, is still collaborating with the Swiss journal *Panderma*, which has gotten even more reactionary with its second issue. So we expelled him, naturally, and there has been a very amusing exchange of telegrams.

First telegram: "After your second offense in *Panderma*, the Situationist International considers you to be an absolute cretin—stop—Go court Hantaï." (Hantaï is *Panderma*'s fascist god.)

Response from Platschek: "The Parisian concierges whose controlling spirit has infected revolutionary intellectuals must be exterminated—stop—The 'we' is detestable."

Second Situationist telegram: "The individualist Platschek is likeable—stop—He's a revolutionary intellectual if not controlled—stop—But control was too easy—stop—It's over—stop—The 'I' without the 'we' falls back into the prefabricated mass."

In short, we have made great progress in Germany.

Best regards to you all, and see you soon,

Guy

1. Helmut Sturm, painter, Situationist in the German section.

To Wyckaert

10 February 59

Dear Maurice,

A rather hurried note.

We have scheduled a Situationist International conference in Munich in April, and we'd really like you to be there. The day of the opening is not yet known. It will probably follow right after Gallizio's preview.

Sturm is here, from the Spur Group. For about a month now the group has been causing an enormous scandal through extremist demonstrations, and also a very violent manifesto (in which they proclaim themselves Situationists). So our meeting promises to be amusing. We will talk more specifically about a project for a journal in German. Can you push the translation of the beginning, at least, of my *Report* in time for the meeting in April? I think Constant is going to take care of the other translations from 2 issues of *Internationale Situationniste*, so you don't have to worry about those. We are probably going to have the exhibition of industrial painting in March at Drouin's. But it is still up in the air.

Platschek is no longer part of the movement in Germany. He is still mixed up with the journal *Panderma*, whose second issue is even more stupidly reactionary than the first (Simon Hantai's reign grows over the publication). So we had to expel him and there was a very amusing exchange of telegrams.

Have you had any news from Korun? I think there's nothing for it but to despair of him. But there's nothing urgent for us to do.

I think we'll be able to see each other, in any case, before Munich.

Best regards to Rob and you,

Guy

P.S. What became of the Young Painter Award and the future prize-winning fish?

To Gallizio, Donna Augusta, and Melanotte,

Thursday [17 February]

Dear Friends,

I am responding now to both your letters (which I received at the same time), because I waited for my meeting with Jorn last night.

My best wishes are with Pinot in the socioeconomic disruption of the Langha.

Otherwise his letter is full of elements that seem very interesting to me for Situationist practice. Since it is very complicated, I will hold onto the text until we can translate it together.

I note only that for the *Antimondo* at Drouin's, we need to discuss the construction of an ambiance, and not yet of a situation (1. because the work concerns only the décor, 2. and mostly, because the décor is constructed in an art gallery, which is to say a place where we can create a scandalous shock but which is thoroughly hostile and unfavorable to us.)

Responding now to what Giors told me:

A) The projected date of arrival—around the beginning of March—is fine.

B) It is not possible to trust Drouin, nor to make him sign the paper that you mentioned (which in any case gives us no real guarantee).

Jorn is convinced that you should present this painting *to customs as a temporary export that would be returning to Italy*. We can always work out paying taxes later, but *only on what has been sold*. This is what is usually done, it optimizes Pinot's financial position with Drouin. then the same painting, under the same formula, *can leave France to go to Munich*. After Munich, what has not been sold will return to Italy.

Responding to what Donna Augusta wrote me.

I already spoke to Jorn about Paolino¹ some time ago. Yesterday he explained to me that he went to see Paolino when he was leaving Alba, but that Paolino has no money (and that this is no doubt the case). This is the very curious experience that Paolino went through: he was a doctor, with three others, in a hospital that expanded without any corresponding rise in the amount the doctors were paid. So now there are twelve (12) doctors sharing the money that was previously divided between four! And so Paolino is complaining that he now has three times less money. What do you think about this story?

The delay of Pinot's exhibition at Van de Loo strikes us as extremely frustrating. Because now our invitations have been sent for the congress in Munich in April. What can be done? Jorn should write to Van de Loo today to explain our problem to him and ask him if he's able to have your exhibition at the beginning of April (it is also much more interesting for him to have such an event the same time he is showing Pinot).

1. Walter Paolino, a pathologist from Turin, a friend of and printer for Jorn in Italy.

Perhaps you can also write to Van de Loo immediately and ask him the same thing (if he could arrange it for the beginning of April)?

Our best regards to you all (we still insist on seeing Giors here when we give free rein to the via Visconti).

Guy

To Gallizio

[February]

Dear Pinot, *G. e N.A.*,

Good news: Jorn saw Van de Loo in Paris. Your exhibition is set for the 15th of *April*, and the opening of our Situationist International conference for *Friday, April 17th*.

So everything is going well here. All the invitations are now set for that date.

Which means that Drouin will have your painting (in transit) between March 6th (if it arrives March 5th, and certainly not much later ...) and around April 5th. Then the *same ambiance* can be rebuilt at Van de Loo (obviously by indicating that it is no more than a documentary reconstruction, and that everything was composed to adapt to a precise location, via Visconti).

Other news: after Van de Loo, the same painting in transit (or what remains of it) can leave for Denmark, where Jorn has organized an exhibition around autumn in Copenhagen.

The "Danish Drouin," whose name is Birch,¹ was in Paris this week. Then he is going to Munich, and he will

1. Birch Gallery in Copenhagen.

go see you in Alba very soon (I don't know if he will arrive in a week or in three weeks?).

Many congratulations for the responses to the Turin rabble (especially the response to Carluccio,² who is at the center of industrial painting's theoretical problem! This is also a hard blow for Drouin).

Regarding the publications to send to the *Librairie Française*, I would like to know *whether or not this bookstore asked you for them*. It is absolutely essential to know this, because the owner of the bookstore is the brother of one of Michèle's uncles (Caputo), and Michèle and this man are on very bad terms.

See you soon. Regards to all,

2. Luigi Carluccio, art critic.

Guy

To Constant

28 February 59

Dear Constant,

The Munich conference is absolutely not theoretically tied to Pinot's exhibition. But there is a simple practical fact: Pinot and Jorn, in any case, had to go to Munich (the same time as the exhibition). It seemed to me that it would be useful to meet up in earnest with these people from Spur who up till now have had only very pictorial, and not very theoretical meetings with the "Situationists." So it was agreed to hold this general conference in Munich. At one point Van de Loo rescheduled Pinot's exhibition for around May or June,

and the two things were dissociated, even in time. For Pinot's convenience above all, I think, who would not have travelled to Munich twice, Jorn got Van de Loo to move the exhibition forward to April 15th. Certainly, that meeting will have to include a very clear campaign against the old artistic illusions (and for example a discussion of each point of the "Amsterdam declaration"). But I do not think that Pinot's exhibition, which is running concurrently, represents the main danger of confusion (because the conference is not open the way the Alba congress was; it is an internal discussion). There are many other dangers. If we are vigilant, I think it just as likely for us to make the positive elements prevail.

I don't think I've explained my position on the "Ideal Palace" to you very well. I consider the Surrealist interpretation to be false, and reactionary. More generally, I am opposed to all "naïve" art. But Cheval seems to me to objectively transcend his own naïve condition by his creation of (with the saddest and most ridiculous means of solitude) a game in architecture—a domain still economically closed to the avant-gardes wreaking havoc within every field of contemporary art. The photo that I sent you seems to me to testify to this summary awareness of the games possible in architecture.

I don't know if we agree on the notion of luxury, which for my part I don't simply reject. I think that one must contribute to the creation of a revolutionary concept of luxury, an enemy to both the old false luxury and the absence of luxury (the comfortable functionalist void of houses and life).

It is true that the popular art so praised by Cobra is a decorative illusion that cannot replace the true creation before which Cobra stopped. But I rigorously

separate Cheval from a popular art (even though he has, personally, all the characteristics of a popular naïve artist), due to the fact that monumental architecture has never been a form of expression of so-called popular art in modern times. The architect who is closest to Cheval is certainly King Ludwig II of Bavaria, whose vision of the world, and of art, was linked to Wagnerian devices (the tendency toward an integral art through the simple addition of artistic effects). Obviously, we rediscover elements of the past everywhere. And we should fight against nostalgia for the past, in all its forms. But therein undoubtedly lies the problem of *détournement*. I would like you to give me your opinion on a text (written by Wolman and myself three years ago, and outdated in certain regards) entitled “User’s Guide to *Détournement*.”¹ If you don’t have it, I can lend it to you.

Regarding the Bureau of Research,² I’ll let you decide. The negative side is the one that you emphasize now (not yet ripe), and which is also the risk that we recognize in the whole of the SI organization.

The positive side is the one that you emphasized in Paris: the propaganda effect, which can accelerate the formation of real action along those lines (and balance real actions at the limit of the old framework, like industrial painting).

What goes without saying is that it would be best to have, immediately or as soon as possible, a work group and a precise program of research—the two going hand in hand. But what goes equally without saying is that we can hardly have confidence in “specialized collaborators” who do not share Situationist experimental positions. Otherwise, we will discover bitterly that the architects, sociologists, urbanists, etc., are as

1. Published in *Les Lèvres nues* n° 8 (May 1956).

2. The creation of the Bureau of Research for Unitary Urbanism, placed under Constant’s direction, will be announced at the third Situationist International Conference in Munich.

limited as painters in their defense of the particular prejudices of their separated sectors (sectors equally surpassed, to the same degree as the individual arts, by the necessity of a total praxis).

I close by emphasizing a fundamental point. I know the risks of failure and even of compromise in the SI, and I have said so publicly (cf. in *Internationale Situationniste* n° 2, “With the reality of present-day culture the only starting point for our activity, we run the risk of confusion, compromise, and failure”). But right now nothing is more advanced than the SI for the research we want to pursue. We have no other effective forces than those we can assemble. We have to shape these forces ourselves, through hard work in reality (I hope that this now takes place, up to a certain point, through the SI). If we arrogantly reject all the unpleasant conditions of the cultural reality in which we are caught and which we must transform, we will manifest, on a personal level, an ironclad (and inoffensive) purity. But such idealist satisfaction will condemn us to a solitude that is opposed to the first necessity of our program: collective action.

Regards,

Guy

To Constant

Monday 2 March

Dear Constant,

Here is the text¹ to translate into English. I hope it will satisfy you.

The translation must be flawless (therefore best checked, I think, by an English speaker?). But it needs to be sent to me by the *beginning of next week*.

See you soon. Regards,

Guy

1. "Inaugural Declaration for the Third Conference of the Situationist International to Revolutionary Intellectuals and Artists," see *Internationale Situationniste* n° 3.

To Constant

3 March 59

Dear Constant,

I think that we understand each other. I spoke of solitude as fundamental acceptance. But there is no doubt that solitude is preferable to a compromised collective action. Everything depends on the tactics that we are able to pursue, and on their results. Like the break-up of Cobra, the break-up of Lettrism in 1952 also entailed the dissolution of an enterprise that was starting to show signs of having economic prospects, and which certainly had a well-known and effective avant-garde presence (in Paris). No one chose that rupture and its corollary solitude more consciously than I. In this case,

as in the case of Cobra, it is even more evident today that rigor, leading to the break-up of the movement, had become an absolute necessity.

On the other hand, I don't believe I have a fondness for painters (although you certainly know better than I the little ruses and the tendency toward ideological irresponsibility in this sphere). You say that I would not have accepted poems in *Potlatch*. It's true: and no more then than now. But have I agreed to reproduce paintings in *Internationale Situationniste*? Or commentaries on paintings?

There is an important point in my last letter that I see misinterpreted. Fortunately, I never said the sociologists and architects needed to be "turned away" and the painters accepted! My precise thoughts on this question are as follows:

1) I said that we will *also* have difficulties with sociologists, architects, etc., because they will generally start off as prisoners of their divided practical activity, the way painters are by painting. And we can't make do with any *privileged occupation* as such, by placing ourselves in the perspective of the experience of a total praxis (cf. the text that I sent you yesterday, and its relationship to politics. And undertakings with politicians pose difficulties).

2) Despite these inevitable difficulties, we quite clearly must not turn away, but on the contrary, *attract*, sociologists, architects, etc. for greater and greater and more conscious collaboration with us.

3) At present, an architect who adheres to our projects is without question much more interesting than a painter, and allows for a superior (though still inadequate collaboration).

4) The most urgent problem, tactically, is to first

balance, then as soon as possible *surpass* the number of painters in the SI with the largest possible number of architects, urbanists, sociologists, and others. And as quickly as possible, with the single reservation that their commitment should be somewhat serious. Afterwards, a favorable development should create new unitary activities among certain individuals (this won't happen without a much more advanced economic base).

Parallel to this effort to unite other specialists through propaganda, we need to obstruct and prevent the conversion of new painters into Situationists. I think that the German group has one or two elements at the moment that are capable of a sudden forward development. We only need to make ourselves clearly understood. Are you planning to do the presentation in Munich that I proposed, on the death of the traditional arts?

It seems to me that in our era the future creators of new activities *naturally* coming from the decomposed individualist arts—provided that they be young and that they are not already comfortably installed therein (in the experience of “lettrist extremism” I saw at least four or five of “the most talented young artists of the new generation” prefer to abandon all activity outright, to abandon any *career* in the artistic spheres, the emptiness of which we all perceived, and for which they also found themselves incapable of pursuing revolutionary replacement. This is a minimally honest attitude, which answers your question “what will remain for them afterwards?” If they understand nothing, no problem. If they understand, they are faced with the alternative of real creation or silence).

I think that the declarations against functionalism are not a serious platform for propaganda among the best current architects, who have long known its empty

results. But, in different forms, this spirit is undoubtedly necessary for the struggle on other levels. Because urbanists, leftist politicians, and aestheticians outside architecture are now thinking about the complete organization of future life and are only aware of the appearance of functionalism, and as if it were a definite certainty.

I know very little about the constructivist avant-garde between the two wars that you mentioned. I probably discounted it as pure plastic research, which is no excuse; in the period preceding my *Report*, I had the tendency to look, very summarily, at all the historic works of the Kandinsky-Mondrian phase as already attained and summarized in Malevich's famous square.

Regarding the program to set up for the Bureau of Research: if you find a great deal of interest in the sociological work that I brought you, I can establish an initial list of points by which a vision, meaning a psychogeographical vision, departs (toward complexity and enrichment) from the ecological vision of a town, however intelligent the reformist urbanism this latter vision establishes.

I believe, once again, from the arguments of your letter, that we are in agreement on our goals.

Regards to you all,

Guy

To Constant

11 March 59

Dear Constant,

Bravo for recruiting architects!¹ *Excellent*. I am very much counting on Oudejans and you in Munich. (I received the English translation. Thanks. If you both come, are you among those signing?)

Still nothing from “Prins Bernhard.”² But I hope that the exhibition will not fall at the same time as Munich (where we’ll have to be available for at least four or five days). If it is afterwards, I will arrange to come to Amsterdam the day of the opening. And, moreover, we will have the soundtrack. So I will not give a “lecture,” but I can participate in the actual discussion with the architects.

For the notes you asked me for, do you need something “written,” or simple summary notes that you could use as you please? (I find the latter preferable ...) I can send you that in a few days. It also makes sense to do this publication thanks to the “Liga.”³

Don’t forget to keep a French translation of this for me, and of your March 5th speech, to publish and cite in the third issue of the journal.

I believe that all this is good preparation—and the only one possible—for a group effort that would have to be most extensive. And this year we are already advanced enough to begin an effective group action (which was perfectly impossible at the Alba congress).

On the subject of politics, I’m not saying that we should involve ourselves in the rigid political habits of current events. And the SI does not presume to have a clear concept of revolutionary politics. I’m saying that

1. A. Alberts and Har Oudejans, Situationists in the Dutch section.

2. Prins Bernhard Fonds, Dutch foundation financing artistic projects.

3. See letter to Korun from 5 February 1958.

between a new point of departure for the revolutionary movement (which is feeling its way in Europe right now, after the death throes of Stalinism) and our “artistic” action, there is no direct dependence, but an *interaction*. Because authentic revolution will make our perspectives more realistic, but our perspectives as such are, I think, a means of struggle for the thought of an authentic revolution. This is the point of a speech in Munich by André Frankin.

A critique of the journal by an anarchist newspaper is attached.⁴ You see that we are not giving the impression of being a school of painting.

Regarding Munich—and for the power struggle that is going to be developing there—I insist on the fact that your coming (Oudejans and you) must be announced as certain—even if for some unfortunate reason there is a last-minute hitch. Which, I hope, will not happen.

Regards,

Guy

4. Article by René Fugler from *Le Monde Libertaire*, March 1959.

To Gallizio

[March]

Carissimo Pinto, G. e N.A.,

Michèle contacted Drouin. He should call as soon as he receives the painting.

But reading your last letter and the one the Giors sent me from Turin, I find several problems that surprise me, and on which I expect a response as soon as possible.

First, you say that you should work now for Van de Loo. But isn't it *the same painting* (as Asger told me) that should be shown at via Visconti and then in Munich?

The question is *crucial*, because if it is not the same, we do not need to force Drouin to do your exhibition "before April 5th or never."

The strangest thing is that you asked me for news of Asger! But I'm assuming Asger is now in your neck of the woods, since he left Paris without telling me (even though I need him here for several extremely important things, and Drouin is also asking to see him), and then he sent me a telegram from Turin telling me that he would return from Italy at the end of last week! (Which he did not do, and which puts me in a very awkward position.)

If he is still at this moment in Alba, remind him of all the urgent problems he left behind him in Paris. I'm wondering how we can manage under these bizarre conditions.

You ask me if I sent the publications to the *Librairie Française*. But I was first awaiting an answer to this question: did the *Librairie Française* ask for them?

Things are going well in Holland, where Constant gave a lecture to some architects and launched a very interesting discussion. A Dutch architect, named Oudejans, has already joined the SI and will come to Munich in April.

See you soon, I hope. Best regards to you all,

Guy

P.S. Giors mentioned Corgnati to me and said that he wanted to see Arnaud. But which Arnaud? (There is Michel, Georges, Noël, and a fourth who owns a gallery on the rue du Four).

Giors also mentioned inviting him to Munich. But Munich is only a meeting of *Situationists*, to discuss our program and our experiments together; it's not a convention open to all modern artists (as in Alba).

Another important problem, the Pierre *Schaeffer* you spoke about is the inventor of "*concrete music*." The experiment is twelve or more years old.

I am entirely opposed to an acoustic ambiance at Drouin, under the conditions in which the exhibition is taking place. It may well add to the confusion over the notion of general ambiance.

And if we are going to create an acoustic ambiance, we need to make it ourselves with real acoustic experiments, and not with the rehashed banalities like those of Pierre Schaeffer. I have no idea how someone could recommend him to you!

To Gallizio

[March]

Caro Pinot,

We are in Denmark, where we are slowly preparing all the April operations in Paris and Munich.

Regards,

Guy, Jorn

Postcard from Århus.

To Constant

21 March

Dear Constant,

Forgive me for being unable to respond more quickly to your request for psychogeographical notes. Jorn suddenly appeared, back from Italy and leaving at short notice for Denmark where I had to follow him to see about the issue of popular universities. I had to admit, once there, that it was an extremely interesting terrain (not for urbanism, but at least for architecture, because by taking over one of these schools—Askov, for example—the construction of a certain number of buildings could be supervised. It's also interesting as a popular base and "experimental teaching"). Jorn is still much too optimistic about our immediate practical possibilities. But I think that it's a direction to go in. I will talk to you about it in more detail. The trip lasted longer than planned; only on my return did I find your letter from last Monday here.

Regarding Denmark, there is a lot of commotion around the SI—which is moreover still something of an unknown quantity there. I gave two specific interviews in those cases where the people were worth the effort. Dahlmann Olsen seemed to want to go with us.¹ I don't have a lot of confidence in him, he is indeed an architect. There is also Jørgen Nash, very friendly but I don't know anything else about him. And another guy who seems to have done some research in acoustics—and *détournement*—which overlap with and confirm the development I witnessed in France and Belgium a few years ago. So he could probably wind up in natural accord with our most

1. Robert Dahlmann Olsen, Danish architect, publisher, writer on art and curator; was part of the editorial committee for *Eristica* n° 2 (July 1956).

extreme perspectives. I don't know exactly who will come to Munich, but at least one will.

On the news from Holland. The lecture is very good. I think that the newspaper article is also a very good thing for propaganda. The fact that Isou is cited is no problem (and it is quite accurate: he did in fact count for as much in this development as Pinot Gallizio!). I will ask Jorn to translate the paper for me. I think that the polemic cited at the end means to say that you have rejected the "magical" and irrational formula they were quietly trying to pin on us.

I am thinking of coming to Amsterdam on May 1st (unless money is a problem of course ...). And I will send you our recording from here in about ten days.

OK for Armando in Munich.² I leave it to you. I received a catalogue from the Dutch Informal Group.³ It's a little muddled, but probably congenial. Something like the Gruppe Spur. And many of our current friends could certainly come from there. As a general rule, I would like to see the strongest Dutch participation in Munich. Holland is about to become the dominant section in our International, our most advanced base!

For your publication work, I am enclosing with this letter some summary notes, part of which you could use as elements in your own work. But they were done in a rush, these are scattered thoughts—perhaps contradictory in places? Only take account of what you accept in your own demonstrations.

At the same time I am also sending—under separate cover—a more coherent article on psychogeography that was published almost four years ago now.⁴ I need this journal back. You can take citations from it.

In regard to the text for Munich.⁵ Consider it not as a text arising from whole-group deliberations, but a declaration of principles, a minimum declaration, to unite

2. Armando, painter, Situationist in the Dutch section.

3. *Nederlandse Informele Groep*, founded in Amsterdam in 1957 by painters Armando, Kees van Bohemen, Jan Hendrikse, Henk Peeters, Jan Schoonhoven and others.

4. Guy Debord, "Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography," *Les Lèvres nues* n° 6 (September 1955).

5. "Inaugural Declaration for the Third Conference of the SI, to Revolutionary Artists and Intellectuals."

and engage those who are a little too happy to proclaim themselves “Situationists.” The studies to be developed together on Unitary Urbanism, etc. will engage them more strongly and concretely (and also eliminate some). But before all else they must be prevailed upon to accept a minimum common revolutionary view. In this way, it seems to me that turning to the workers’ movement is the most scandalous thing in the decomposed modern art world, which has become generally apolitical and fascistic (Klein,⁶ Mathieu, some of the better-known “Angry Young Men”).⁷ It’s the best defense against the “pictorial” tendency.

Exactly what you say (“the working class, historically having no culture, implies the possibility, the necessity, of a new type of culture”) is one of the essential bases—and deliberately hidden since—in Marx’s thought: “The proletariat is revolutionary or it is nothing.” It is in this connection that our own experimental labor for a new culture/use of life is at once *justified* and *usable* by the authentic revolutionary movement.

Furthermore I believe in the possibility, and even in the necessity, of a new beginning for the revolution—and even in Europe, *which isn’t very stable* and is threatened by fascism. Even in the case where such jolts would remain “local,” we already have support, positions taken, in six countries. We need to prepare ourselves to work hardest in the best ... The interaction between thought and politics is as old as the hills, it’s true. What is new—unfortunately—is the interaction between the revolutionary movement in culture and the authentic revolutionary movement in politics. I say “unfortunately” because I think that all the conditions for this were already ripe in the 1920s.

See you soon. Regards,

Guy

6. Yves Klein, French painter, whose monochrome paintings were announced for the “First Psychogeographical Exhibition,” at the Taptoe Gallery in Brussels, February 2nd through 26th, 1957.

7. A group of English writers (John Osborne, Colin Wilson, Kenneth Tynan, etc.) formed in 1956.

To Gallizio

Tuesday 24 [March]

Carissimo Pinot, G. e N.A.,

I just returned from Denmark, where things are going well for us. Here I find difficulties, but they are not coming from Drouin personally. Michèle has stayed in contact with him, and he has been very nice up to now.

There are huge delays stemming from the problems and holdups *clearing customs* in Paris. And last evening Ambroseter said that the painting won't be *delivered to Drouin until tomorrow* (March 25th).

For Van de Loo, I should say first that I arranged nothing with him and that I have not even participated in any discussion with him. Asger alone met him when he recently passed through Paris. So I don't know *anything* about projects set between you and him. In principle, you should stick to those projects.

In any case:

1) The date of April 9th is entirely *unacceptable*.

April 9th is too early in relation to our meeting, which isn't until the 17th.

It's ok to start on the 13th or 14th, but not before.

2) Given the *length*, now proven, of all these transfer operations, we cannot hope to have the same painting in Munich before the 15th, even if Drouin shows it from the 1st to the 8th (which is now a bit short, given the time limit for the invitations and posters).

So it would be advisable to plan on sending other paintings directly from Alba to Munich for the 15th of April (if this is possible for you).

I will telegraph you, if necessary, the date Drouin

sets for starting here. And I fancy you'll be able to come immediately?

We have, in principle, many projects to carry out simultaneously in Paris in April, and in Germany. But this now presents a really large task of rapid organization.

Given the seriousness and urgency of these problems—the first of which is setting up the industrial painting—Asger and I agreed to meet almost every evening this week. But, to start with, I waited for him in vain yesterday, and he still hasn't made any attempt to explain his disappearance!

I don't really have any help, or even information, for everything I need to do, including the practical preparation for the meeting in Munich. In case that we still have any conflict with Drouin *over the date*, the last instructions that I received from you were to force him to schedule the show before April 15th or never. Can you respond to the following two points, the second of which is *twofold*.¹

A) Can you arrange the show at Van de Loo without any element of the painting that is presently in Paris?

B) (If your answer to A is "yes")

1) Can we agree to leave the industrial painting with Drouin to be shown—say at the beginning of May?—in the case that it's *truly physically impossible* to do the show at the beginning of April?

2) Can we, moreover, agree to a preview in Paris around *April 10th or 12th*? Which is to say that after the preview we leave the painting there, and we rush over to Munich where Pinot's other painting is waiting for us?

Best regards to you. See you soon,

Guy

1. In the margin, points A and B were linked: "Urgent response on all of these questions."

To Constant

4 April 59

Dear Constant,

I have many responses to give you regarding your last two letters, and the events that are taking place. As I don't have much time at this point before Munich, I will respond rather briefly. But I hope that we can discuss these issues soon in person.

Prins B. Fonds. Nothing yet, I'm keeping a close watch.

The date for Munich. Meeting *April 17th*. In principle, I mean according to Jorn, our German friends and Van de Loo should be able to house everyone. The only address that I've been given for a meeting place (because I am going alone, Jorn will arrive from Italy) is that of the *Van de Loo Gallery, Maximilianstrasse 7*, because someone will always be there with instructions.

Bravo for the open letter on the demolition of the Amsterdam Stock Exchange! I would like to have the text of that letter (in translation) for the journal.¹

I will send you the recorded "Message from the SI" by Monday (the 6th) at the latest. It lasts about 15 minutes in its first version—simple phrases in French, spoken by three voices. I will also send the written text to make the translation easier.

Last week Belgian radio (or rather the progressive elements who have infiltrated that organization) recorded a conversation in Paris about the SI. I used the occasion to make a very clear declaration about our position on painting, on the disappearance of the individual arts, and about the fact that no single "artistic development" in the old order could represent us.

1. Extracts in *IS* n° 3, p. 16.

Regarding the planned inaugural declaration, given your opposition, I think it is preferable not to publish it in this form. Its formulation obviously suffered from the lack time for a preliminary discussion. It now remains to be seen what this discussion might achieve and if it will be brought to a positive conclusion by the end of the conference.

As elements of this discussion, I am attaching to this letter a direct response, and a copy of two corrections requested by André Frankin, who in the meantime has agreed to sign onto the project in any case.² For the convenience of the discussion, I consider the text of this project to be divided into 7 self-contained paragraphs, and that your critique was made in 4 points (really 3, plus a conclusion that did not have a number).³

Regards,

Guy

2. Cf. "Plate-forme pour une révolution culturelle," *IS* n° 3, p. 24.

3. Cf. "Discussion sur un appel aux intellectuels et artistes révolutionnaires," *IS* n° 3, p. 22.

Response to Alberts, Armando, Constant, Oudejans.

Your position originates in a distinction between unitary urbanism and the whole of the Situationist movement. You arbitrarily create a *conflict of precedence* between several aspects of a problem, when the newness and the importance of this problem reside principally in its *indivisible* character. (This is even expressed in the formulation "the members of the Center for the study of unitary urbanism" ... I believe that I myself am also a member of this Center.) These reservations aside, I am in agreement with your first point. Our project in its present inadequate formulation must designate more

and more clearly our practical originality, rather than remain in positions based on accepted principles. But the purpose of this text was precisely to seek a more solid link to the minorities among the revolutionary avant-garde (first to balance out the conservative “artistic” tendency among us). This leads us to examine your second point.

The position that you emphasize in your second point is purely and simply reformist. Without wanting to open an entire debate on reformism here, I say again in passing that I believe capitalism incapable of dominating and *fully* employing its productive forces, incapable of abolishing the fundamental reality of exploitation, and therefore incapable of peacefully making way for the superior forces of life called for by its own material development. What you say about the “abolition, for the working class, of grim material poverty” has actually occurred over the last fifty years in some Western European countries and in America. It has been paid for by the colonial slavery of the rest of humanity, and the atrocities of two world wars. “The slow development in the economic sphere” that you foresee overlooks the Chinese revolution, the revolutionary movements in all the underdeveloped countries, the harsh economic and political results of Stalinist collectivism and the central phenomenon of the “cold war,” and the success of the monopolistic and catholic-military reaction in Europe. The perspective of social revolution has *changed* profoundly in relation to its classical schemas. But it is real. On the other hand, when you find progressive forces only in “intellectuals who revolt against cultural poverty,” you yourselves are utopians. What can intellectuals do without ties to an enterprise that brings comprehensive change to social relations? And isn’t the deficiency of this revolutionary enterprise today precisely the cause of the

timidity of this revolt among the intellectuals? If we can't wager on the perishable character the entire organization of our society, what is there to do? Persuade—whom?—that more attention could be paid to the layout of houses? Since together we've made the right critique of the objective social deformations of today's painters, shouldn't we be wondering about the relationship of such a moderate-optimist ideology to the circumscribed practical activity of architects working in a country with the highest standard of living, where a developed bourgeois democratic state intervenes in urbanism and exerts a reforming authority over its natural anarchy?

Moving on to your third point. If it is a critique of inadequate vocabulary, which harked back to an inordinate degree to that 1920s revolutionary spirit, you are absolutely right. We are all in agreement on rejecting "every romanticized conception of a past reality," and this is precisely what the final sentence of our text asserted, returning to a rather innocent line from Marx about poetry and *détourning* it for a stronger, more contemporary meaning. But it seems that, paradoxically, you would accuse us of tagging along behind a false and outdated conception of political revolution, whereas we propose nothing less (see Frankin's 2nd thesis) than showing, through the practical activity of a cultural revolution, a new point of departure for revolutionary praxis.

Naturally you are right to conclude by recalling that "what unites the current avant-garde is the revolt against existing cultural conditions," and right to insist on the necessity of *practical* work. The problem for *all of us* is that we have not yet managed to advance beyond an initial degree of practical labor, which is theorizing and propaganda (example: your taking a position on the

demolition of the Amsterdam Stock Exchange). This difficulty itself comes from the fact that the revolt against existing cultural conditions cannot stop at any of the artificial divisions of bourgeois culture, within culture, or between culture and life (because then we would have no real need for a revolt).

A final word. Our necessary activity is dominated by the question of the *totality*. Take note of it. Unitary urbanism is not a conception of the totality, and must not become one. It is an operational instrument constructing an extended setting. Unitary urbanism is “central” to the extent that it is the center of the general construction of a milieu. Neither this theoretical vision nor even its intended application will allow us to think about determining or dominating a way of living. That would be a kind of unrealistic dogmatism. Reality is more complex and rich than that, and includes all the links between these ways of life and their settings. This is the only terrain equal to our desires today. The terrain where we must intervene.

4 April 1959
G.-E. Debord

To Gallizio

Saturday 4 April

Caro Pinot, G. e N.A.,

I don't know what is happening with Drouin, who should have let us know as soon as Ambroseter had delivered, which was a full week ago, according to what

Ambroseter told us. And since, it has been impossible to meet up with Drouin. He is gone. He is invisible!

Don't worry too much about this situation, though. What is the explanation? I don't know, but it doesn't change anything essential—Drouin is going to be obligated to do your show shortly, and he has nothing to gain from buying time in so pitiful a manner. He would do well to assume his responsibilities!

Among the reasons for Drouin's disappearance, we can mention:

—Easter vacation. But it's unlikely.

—A wish to delay the show again without facing our ultimatum?

—Or, and *this is Asger's opinion*, perhaps a financial situation so critical that Drouin is unable to pay the customs! This is also Genia's point of view. Genia is going to intervene to find out the truth.

The only certain result—chance or ill-will—is that it will be materially impossible to have your preview before Munich. Only 10 days remain—and nothing is yet set—and it is now the weekend, etc.!

So I think that we should demand—with warnings if necessary—a date at the *beginning of May, before the 10th* in any case. You should thus go to *Munich first* where we will all meet on *Friday April 17th* (Maximilianstrasse) and then you will return to Paris, for your via Visconti show, before returning to Italy. This is to say that you will make the anticipated trip but in the reverse order.

Asger has a brilliant idea, to show in Paris shortly after you, to establish the relationship between the two complementary scandals.¹

I am starting an experimental film² the day after tomorrow, and I will continue it after Munich.

1. "Modifications," a show of twenty paintings modified by Asger Jorn at the Galerie Rive gauche from May 6th to 28th 1959 (cf. *Potlatch* n° 30).

2. *On the Passage of a Few People Through a Rather Brief Moment in Time*.

Belgian radio asked me for an interview on the SI and I was able to speak at length about industrial painting and on the meaning we attribute to it (this is the first strike against the explanations that Drouin's friends are going to try to give).

Have courage and see you soon in Munich. I will telegraph you whatever result is eventually set in the coming days.

With love,

Guy

To Gallizio

Saturday 6 PM [4 April]

Caro Pinot, G. e N.A.,

I just got your letter from the 3rd, after sending mine. No one has told you anything about your painting because *none of us have managed to see it yet!*

Either Drouin has received it and has not yet told us—or else it isn't out of customs yet!

I am pleased you told me your plan to leave for Munich, exactly the one that I proposed to you in my first letter today.

So we should ask Drouin to arrange your preview between April 25th and May 10th.

I am also very reassured that you will be in Munich from the 14th. So you will be able to welcome us all on the 17th.

In particular, please look into the question of lodging

with Van de Loo and the friends from Spur (especially for the Dutch, a number of whom have said they would come—there may well be 4 of them, and all broke).

I'm worried that Asger's somewhat untimely optimism may once again force us to search frantically for a last-ditch solution.

Perhaps I might be able arrive in time for your preview?¹

See you soon. Yours,

Guy

1. The industrial painting show at the Van de Loo gallery in Munich from April 15th to May 8th, 1959.

To Constant

13 April 1959

Telegram from Paris

LODGING GUARANTEED FOR 4 DUTCH¹ 2 KILOMETERS MUNICH—STOP—COME BY CAR—STOP—REGARDS

1. At the Third SI Conference in Munich the Dutch section will in fact be represented by three of its members: Armando, Constant, and Oudejans.

Debord

To Constant¹

[17–20 April]

1. A note Guy Debord passed to Constant during the Munich Conference held in the back room of the hotel *Herzogenstand* (*The Ducal Staging Post*).

Every time someone has no *new practical activity*—and even no truly new *project*

he loves to talk about pseudo-philosophy and metaphysics.

To Straram

Munich, 19 April 1959
At the Third SI Conference

I like your letter a lot.

We are certainly in agreement. We lead, with all the circumstantial differences, the same life. Or better to say: we are heading toward the same life.

I hope that we can see each other soon, to arrange the details.

*A fine à l'eau*¹ in anticipation of that meeting.

Guy

P.S. I have taken due note of the Miron-Leclerc² replacement.

Ivan³ has made a few attempts to get in touch, but even though it would have been so easy for him to do so openly he thought it better to employ ruses and intermediaries, and always in the bad company of Gaëtan,⁴ who can no longer be of interest to anyone.

The game's up on this occasion.

1. A classic cocktail of Cognac and water.

2. Gaston Miron and Gilles Leclerc, collaborators on the *Cahier pour un paysage à inventer* edited by Straram in Montréal.

3. Ivan Chtcheglov.

4. Gaëtan Langlais, member of the Lettrist International in 1953.

To Constant

Friday 24 April

Dear Constant,

I hope you had a good trip back, livened up by your little stockpile out of the proceeds looted from the horrible neighbor!

It seems that now the very clear and important step forward that we took in Munich should be made concrete as quickly as possible. The first question—that we have yet to discuss—is the date for the next *Potlatch* to appear. What date do you foresee? I would be happy to be able to travel to Amsterdam just before the publication of this first issue. But I don't know if that will be possible, especially if we were to select a date that is very soon?

To open the first issue, I propose writing a brief note recalling the history of *Potlatch*, and the meaning that we presently attribute to the new series.¹

It seems to me that extracts of your report on unitary urbanism should also be published (the complete text to be in *IS* n° 3). So I need to send you a corrected version of the text (I mean with a few minor grammatical mistakes corrected).

The Amsterdam declaration in its definitive form (it's a little long) or only the *adopted corrections* should also be published, since this note is exactly the same as the one that will appear later in *IS* n° 3. This latter possibility seems preferable to me, due to the lack of space. (Can I draft this right now?)

So we have a lot to discuss by mail, and I'm counting on reading something from you soon.

I also recommend you distribute your letter on the Amsterdam Exchange *as soon as possible* to the newspapers, and then print it in *Potlatch*. That letter is a very good act of propaganda that can later be *explained* in the next situationist demonstration, at the "Liga" or in your show at Sandberg's.

My apologies for the handwriting in this letter: I'm writing in a rush, from a café. I'll try to send the promised copies of *Mémoires* from Holland tomorrow.²

1. Cf. "Le rôle de *Potlatch* autrefois et maintenant," *Potlatch* n° 30.

2. Initially scheduled for the 1st of May 1958, the edition of Debord's *Mémoires*, after multiple delays from the printer Permild and Rosengreen, was finally completed in December 1958.

All the best to you, and give my best to Oudejans and Armando.

Guy

P.S. An extra day in the company of the Germans³ confirms our impressions about them. Heinz Höfl and Zimmer: fine. Eisch: most likely fine (little Gretel, in a different way, is also somewhat of that ilk). The unfortunate ones are Sturm and Prem, to different degrees. All of them capable of a very favorable evolution.

A not insignificant detail: All of them—Prem aside—now have a certain friendship with us, which means that the difficult and rather humiliating stage of “instruction” seems to have been overcome, not in the practical details, but in general attitude.

3. Heinz Höfl, Hans-Peter Zimmer, Erwin Eisch, Gretel Stadler, Helmut Sturm, Heimrad Prem, from the German section of the SI.

To Constant

Saturday [25 April]

Questions:

—Oudejans's address

—Has the date of your show been set?¹

Dear Constant,

Here are the promised sentences. Naturally, their order of succession is arbitrary. In any case, in my opinion, the last two are excellent, and should feature in the final selection. The final sentence on the first page (“A same avenue can be ...”) could stop at the period, on the second line, and delete the whole ending? Do what's best.

1. The exhibition of thirty spatial constructions by Constant will begin on 4 May 1959 at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

Still nothing from “Prins Bernhard.” I will write you as soon as I have news—or anything from Munich. Sturm and Asger finished the German translation.

We still regret that your stay was so short (even if brevity characterizes Situationist ambiances, theoretically), and we really hope to see you in Amsterdam. And we are certainly counting on your extended visit this fall.

Regards to you and the entire population of the Unitary Urbanism Bureau of Research.

Guy

To Constant

Sunday Evening [26 April]

Dear Constant,

I am answering your last letter, which crossed mine in the mail.

What you say about the majority of the SI is perhaps still true, formally, but you must certainly see that the truly Situationist minority has been growing in strength over the last few months. Certainly just the fact of bringing truly new and important ideas into a vaguely modernist-nihilist general ambiance gives us a *de facto* authority. Henceforth this minority controls the debate of ideas in the SI, and thus its propaganda—i.e. it guards and reinforces its chances of promoting the concrete and considerably active movement whose necessity we proclaim. It is true that the most advanced positions are in Holland and France, but the extension of these positions should also develop in the other

“sections” if we do our jobs well, and this process will swiftly overtake the former artistic leaders of these groups.

For this, we obviously cannot rely on the abstract accuracy of our ideas, but work to spread our problems, and our outlines for solutions, everywhere. Note that in this regard, the official publications of the SI are now controlled by Paris and Amsterdam. It is up to us to use these means, which correspond equally to the centers where the new experimentation is most advanced.

I am entirely in agreement about a collective publication on unitary urbanism. We will have further occasion to discuss the details together. I remind you only that this task should not be too separated from the next issue of the journal, of which I am solely in charge and which I hope to devote principally to unitary urbanism (with a fairly large part devoted to the Munich conference, and an opening text on the construction of a situation). Can we plan on extracts in the journal, and more complete texts in this publication? Or would you prefer to gather into this publication (what size, approximately?) certain texts already published on various recent dates?

Like you, I refuse pragmatism just as much as idealism, and antipragmatism just as much as pragmatism because these are deeply outdated philosophical quarrels that serve to hide the emptiness and repetition of the real production of pseudointellectual artists. In fact, I believe that the importance of dialectical materialism, its decisive (but still barely exploited) progress in the history of ideas, is above all the *supremacy of practice*, the notion of *praxis* that *contains and supersedes* theoretical reflection, and which is itself always inseparable from a praxis. Thus, those who still think in scholarly terms but who vaguely see the unity of the concrete problem are reduced to attacking *successively* pragmatism and idealism. This is

the struggle on two fronts that Jorn led at the conference, which always has an allure of diplomatic opportunism. And which always presents the danger of ending up with a preference for one of the positions alternatively rejected. Oudejans is much closer to the conception of a total praxis because his idea of practice and technique certainly does not reject theory. But he has fallen into a trap by defending pragmatism itself, which is a completely inadequate position precisely because it is incapable of employing new techniques (it seems to me that the idea of pragmatism is more the adaptation to the world than the *changing* of this world based on the comprehension of its own practical movement). In short, what is still very much missing in the SI is dialectics. But let's reject the old antinomies that root us in appearances that are the opposite of our tendencies and underlying intentions. The danger of being taken in by these antinomies, I have already said, is infinitely more in regards to "old philosophizing artists" than in regards to men engaged in a new practical action.

Another anecdote that summarizes this point very well. At that charming party at the end of the conference, Madame Van de Loo came over to joke with me that she was surprised to hear talk of practical actions in my regard, as she had imagined me more of a theoretician. She was greatly surprised when I told her, sincerely, that "nothing has ever interested me beyond a certain practice of life." (It is precisely this that kept me from being an artist, in the current sense of the word and, I hope, a theoretician of aesthetics!)

I hope that my article about you¹ appears in the publication on Unitary Urbanism, but it will probably need some modifications, because the *tone* of the article was manifestly that of a *preface to a work by an individual*

1. "Constant and the Path of Unitary Urbanism," see the letter to Constant on 26 January 1959.

(catalogue of photos or theoretical book, it doesn't matter) and wouldn't really work in a collective publication, I think. I'm speaking from memory, without having looked back over the text. But I obviously wrote it precisely from the perspective of a "preface," and to the extent that it succeeded in that, its tone may seem misplaced elsewhere.

In conclusion, do your best; I approve in any case the use that you will make of it. I will be very happy to see you, with Oudejans, in Paris.

Regards,

Guy

To Constant

Thursday 30 April

Dear Constant,

I am responding, once again in great haste, answering your last two letters.

Agreed on *Potlatch* being ready in a month. And agreed also on giving it this urbanist orientation (with plans, etc.). So we will have a chance to see each other before. I hope that we could arrange to meet in Amsterdam in the beginning of June, with Wyckaert as well.

Also agreed about Oudejans (I only mentioned a tactical incident in Munich). The example of the vacuum cleaner works very well. Everything is in the question of praxis, as opposed to the hollow dualist philosophies of outdated artistic chatter. You are right to say: we have too much to do to be endlessly repeating these explanations.

They will be surpassed by our very action. And then this naiveté will no longer be raised against us, because this obstruction can only be understood through the actual transition in which some of us see both the emptiness of the fields they regrettably leave behind, and the emptiness of the virgin fields. So these repetitions outside of our real problems are for them a reassuring way of filling the void.

I received your catalogue: it is very beautiful. At the same time I think that ideology in general, and specifically unitary urbanism, has suffered a certain setback with the modification of the original catalogue. I doubt that Sandberg did this innocently. He naturally tried to make a catalogue more precisely tailored to the Amsterdam museum than to the SI.

I would like at least 50 copies, and if possible more like 70 or 80.

I prefer, speaking for myself and without having the time to ask for anyone else's opinion, the term *Bureau of Research* for Unitary Urbanism, because that seems to me a little more modest (for people outside), and because that risks less confusion (within the SI) over the notion of a "center," of domination, etc. The bureau is the place where a certain job is done, and those who participate in this job compose the bureau. The word "center" smacks a bit of the idea of distinction and hierarchy. And you saw in Munich how these minute details could be inflated by the remnants of personal artistic vanity.

See you soon. Best regards to you, Oudejans, Armando, etc.

Guy

P.S. The photo of the unitary urbanists meeting in secret is very successful.

To Constant

2 May 1959

Dear Constant,

Again a—forgotten—word about your catalogue:

As it is the first publication of our collection (Bibliothèque d’Alexandrie¹), you need to keep *between 200 and 300* copies at your disposal, which can ultimately be bound with the common jacket of the collection, and sent to collectors with the series. (This in addition to the copies that I requested for immediate distribution.)

Another thing, extremely *urgent*. I have not yet received the tape recording promised by Oudejans. Can you remind him that I absolutely need it by the end of the week that starts tomorrow? Thanks in advance.

I hope to finish my film soon, and then get to work with Amsterdam on preparing the next publications of the SI.

Regards to everyone,

Guy

1. The Bibliothèque d’Alexandrie started to publish—under Asger Jorn’s direction—monographs “whose autonomy did not involve the ideological responsibility of the SI.” The first volume was to assemble six titles: *Constant* (May 1959); *Pinot Gallizio* (July 1960); *Maurice Wyckaert* (announced in July 1960 but never carried out); Jorn and Wemaëre, *Le Long Voyage* (December 1960); Guy Debord, *Contre le cinéma* (1964). The sixth, *Les Origines de l’Internationale situationniste*, never appeared.

To Wyckaert

5 May

Dear Maurice,

A word in great haste (Asger’s show is tomorrow,¹ Pinot’s May 12th,² and I am finishing my film).³

1. Jorn’s “Modifications,” Galerie Rive gauche.

2. Gallizio’s “La Caverne de l’antimatière,” Galerie René Drouin.

3. Debord’s film *On the Passage of a Few People Through a Rather Brief Moment in Time*.

A letter from America tells us that the journals and books that we sent to New York never arrived, held up once again by customs or some French border police or other, without our being notified. Under these conditions we're thinking it would be useful to send you in Brussels some of the books that are in Denmark—rather than have them enter France, where it seems a little difficult for them to leave.

I hope to be free in the first few days of June, and if we do make our trip to Amsterdam we could collaborate there on the first issue of the new series of *Potlatch*—which the Dutch⁴ cannot foresee appearing before then, but which should not be delayed beyond that period.

See you soon. Best regards to all,

Guy

4. This first and only issue of the new series will be published in French in Amsterdam.

To Jorn

Thursday [7 May]

Dear Asger,

I brought the stock from Gus's.¹ I looked every bit the extremely busy furniture mover in the middle of the preview.² I think that the collages are very good, but I'll need to look at them at a more leisurely moment!

I also met a certain G. Frank yesterday, a messenger from Streep.³ Everything is OK.

I am leaving Paris today for about a week.

Here are the first corrected proofs. You can send

1. The stock of *Mémoires* from R.A. Augustinci.

2. Jorn's show at the Galerie Rive gauche, May 6th.

3. Jon Nicholas Streep, Jorn's first dealer in the United States (a "gentleman dealer" unaffiliated with any gallery).

the rest to me, and I will return them to you when I get back.

Best,

Guy

N.B. In France right now the term “artist-painter” is only used in administrative terms, to denote a job (for example on an identity card). Or else it is used in the *high society* sense (as on a visiting card or stationery), which always means: one of those guys that paints Notre-Dame on postcards. No modern artist is described by the term “artist-painter.” It is very different from “Kunstmaler.” I think you shouldn’t be given a title in the article.

To Madame Dassin

19 May 59

Letter on SI stationery.

Madame,

I am the author of the inscriptions appended to your walls during Saturday’s party.¹

The theme of the reunion and the ambiance of the space had seemed to call for such corrections.

Having learned who you are, I would like to assure you that now I consider them utterly superfluous.

Please accept my best regards.

G.-E. Debord

1. Invited to a society evening—against South African apartheid --organized at Béa Dassin’s by one of the Peter Sisters, the wife of his Danish producer, Debord, taken with boredom and drink, found it advisable to flirt with Dassin’s twelve-year-old daughter and cover the walls with inscriptions like “Long Live Free Algeria” and “Liberate Krim Belkacem.” Thanks to this letter the producer was helped out of difficulty and the matter duly closed with a bouquet of orchids and dinner at *Haynes*.

To Constant

20 May 59

Dear Constant,

I think that you are quite right to have me reread the *Report*, replacing “poetry” with “painting.”

Pinot’s show was manifestly a reactionary farce. Drouin played his part cleverly enough and Pinot neither knew how nor wanted to object.

Of course the show didn’t represent the movement in any way, and on this point Jorn displayed timely resolve in refusing, as I did, to publish a situationist tract on the two painting shows. The question that is now on the agenda, with Sandberg, is the exhibition of Pinot’s painting at the Stedelijk Museum, in a structure built by us. As I told Alberts, who passed by on Sunday, such a show could be an interesting pretext for us if we supervise the installation, and if we have the opportunity to engage in a very large situationist action in Amsterdam the same day (with *dérives*, etc.). If these conditions can’t be fulfilled we should openly reject these outdated games instead.

The most serious shortcoming was that Pinot, in his practical attitude towards the Parisian painting public, more or less consciously accepted the role of a very ordinary artist recognized by his peers (by contrast, the exhibition of *détourned* paintings by Jorn was, I believe, a very sharp break with this milieu—without wanting to exaggerate the objective value of that break ...).

Yesterday I had no option but to refuse to meet three painters from Berlin, who were “interested in Situationism” and whom Pinot had brought right over to

me so that they could be enrolled as quickly as possible! My refusal caused an atrocious scandal, and Pinot's fury was really something to see.

Jorn has been in Italy for 8 days now—which has left Pinot to his own devices, and free to amass stupidities. Heinz Höfl is here for 3 or 4 days. I was very pleased to meet Alberts who is also interesting. Thank you for the 50 catalogues—and the recording I received earlier.

I hope to finish my film quickly—by June 10th—and if I do, I will come to Amsterdam as soon as possible for the important and urgent work that we need to carry through.

Best regards to you, Armando, and Har,

Guy

To Constant

Saturday 23 May

Dear Constant,

My film has been delayed by at least three weeks because of a few bits of American films,¹ the rights for which I could not obtain without a corresponding delay. So I have been forced to push the editing back to the end of July. But on the other hand, I'm now free over the coming days for other work.

I just called Wyckaert, and he has agreed to come to Amsterdam with me *next Saturday*, May 30th. I hope that this period is convenient for you, and the other

1. For *détournement*.

participants in our “little North-West conference.” I think that even Alberts will be back?

So, until Saturday. Best regards to all of you,

Guy

P.S. The very moment I closed my letter to you, the telephone rang: Noël Arnaud, who said that he had found your card long afterward (not having been in Paris) and that he would like to have your address, because he will be passing through Holland in a couple of weeks. I very coolly gave him your address. As he said that he hadn't seen you in a very long time, I replied that “it is *rarely* too late.” And I wished him good luck. Naturally it is possible that, in the story that you remember, Rodriguez lied. But why? He could not have known yet that you had sent a card to Arnaud that very morning. So, if he really had lunch with him, Arnaud is the liar. All this is really²

In short, you be the judge. And you can give him a pataphysical reception. In any case, keep the activities of the SI shrouded in mystery.

2. Illegible, ripped edge.

To Trocchi

1 June 59

Dear Alex,

I applaud your thorough exploration of America and of the American pharmaceuticals.¹ Thanks for the invitation to New York. I also think that a lot of the future can be seen in that corner of the world, despite the negative

1. Alexander Trocchi, strong proponent of drugs and their legalization.

aspects. And I fondly remember the time in London. But I fear this trip will not be possible for me right now; in any case there is the question of crossing the border, where one of our friends was denied entry only a few months ago.² I hope that you will return here even if I don't come looking for you?

Regarding the rue Campagne-Première,² Khatib is a friend of Dahou, who left him the key awaiting your return—which he thought was imminent.³ And time passed. I thought that Khatib paid the few small bills that had collected. Write me the solution you want to adopt in this business, and I'll take care of it.

No news from Dahou, for a rather long time now. Life in France is still heading in a very unpleasant direction. But we have our fun too. Regards,

Guy

2. Jorn (see letters from 12 October 1958 to Jorn and Constant).

3. Cf. letter from 23 August 1957 to Dahou.

To Constant

2 June 59

Exploring a magnificent port. Hello to everyone.

Guy

False Pope¹

1. This postcard of Pope Pius XII was sent from Antwerp. The final phrase follows "real photo" on the card.

To Constant

[Early June]

FIRST MODELS FOR THE NEW URBANISM¹

May ... an exhibition of² ... spatial constructions by Constant opened at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

These constructions, made of metal elements supporting surfaces of transparent plastic materials, summarize an experimental development spanning several years. Only a few of the latest constructions in this chronological series were models, in the full sense of the term, intended for unitary urbanism; the intermediary constructions had been models for isolated monuments, and the initial attempts ended in an extreme form of sculpture. The problem with models of unitary urbanism is only broached with Constant's first efforts, which represent only one of the directions to take (the model reduced to a terrain for new games, a terrain still presented abstractly because it is not integrated into the social space of a specific city).

Yet this exhibition can signal the transition, within modern artistic production, of the commodity-object *per se*, whose function is simply to be seen, to the project-object whose more complex evaluation evokes an action to come, a superior kind of action concerning the totality of life.

On the occasion of the opening of this exhibition, the Dutch Situationists played a tape-recorded piece of theoretical propaganda. It was the second time that they resorted to this method of public address.

1. This text, which will be shortened for its appearance in *Potlatch* new series n° 1, is preceded by directions in pencil: "Place this text (4)—between 'Galleries de Paris' and 'L'Enlèvement des ordures.'"

2. Directions in pencil: "Put in numbers."

*Regarding the corrections*³

The 2nd paragraph was very muddled. I believe I have understood your thought by reformulating it as follows:

“The construction of districts, old or new, is in obvious conflict with established modes of behavior, and all the more so with the new ways of living that we seek.”

Instead of “we’re still betting on a change on earth,” I would put, so as not to *set ourselves against* a potential interplanetary adventure: “we’re still betting first of all on ...”

Regarding “the new and joyous ambiance in which we would like to live,” I would eliminate “and joyous” because that adjective here gives the impression of a vulgar happiness, like a street festival today. And the idea is better understood without it.

OK?

The rest is a simple question of agreements and harmony. There are almost no corrections.

But the main problem: the title

“*Our ambition is in ambiance*”

doesn’t seem good to me (ambiance giving too restricted an idea: that of a setting, or even simply of decoration). I propose:

Our ambition is in the total construction $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{of life} \\ \text{of place} \end{array} \right.$

—Or even any other sort of title you prefer.⁴

3. For the article in *IS* n° 3, p. 37.

4. The final title will be: “Another City for Another Life.”

To Jorn

Paris, 7 June 1959

Dear Asger,

I think that everything will go well for the film, if Augustinci doesn't create difficulties again this time.

We should be finished by July 10th because obtaining other American films has imposed a delay. On the other hand I think I have the German film that we were initially refused.

I used my forced vacation in the cinematographic work to go to Amsterdam with Wyckaert. We met Sandberg. *He agrees to a large exhibition from the situationist movement* (show, construction of an ambiance, conference, *dérives*) that will start *15 May 1960*.

But Sandberg does not want to do a show of Pinot's work. He was unfavorably struck by Drouin's "clownish" presentation, and probably even more by the clumsiness that Drouin isn't responsible for: Pinot had sent a letter to Sandberg to ask him directly to show his painting. Among other pathetic attempts to sell out, he had already invited Capelle (that pitiful individual Drouin sent to my place one evening when you were there with d'Haese) to participate in his moot show in Amsterdam, etc.

Your show made a serious impact. Even in Brussels, they tell me. And the enclosed article about you was by a Surrealist!¹

The success of Constant's show served us well with Sandberg, who had expected a great deal of incomprehension. So much so that Sandberg is now looking for a really big scandal, and is contemptuous of half-measures. I think that we will be in a position to go *beyond* his desires.

1. "Asger Jorn or Modified Painting" by José Pierre appeared in *France Observateur* June 4, 1959.

Write me when you receive this letter. I hope that it finds you in Albisola? Regards,

Guy

To Constant

8 June 59

Dear Constant,

The text for *Potlatch* is very good.¹

I hope to send all the texts by Thursday June 11th at the latest. You haven't sent the review of your show, or the note on the Amsterdam Stock Exchange. Should I correct them too? It would be best.

To type up the copy for photocopying, perhaps you should use a French typewriter (to have all the accents?)

The letter from Pinot is as disgusting as it is ridiculous. My advice is to answer him—curtly—and give him the news I just gave Asger: Sandberg has agreed to a general *exhibition of the SI* in May 60.² But he refused to show Pinot's work. So there's nothing more to be said.

We are now—all the situationists, but more specifically the Dutch, Wyckaert, and myself—entirely responsible for the organization of that exhibition. So we decide whether to use—or not use—this or that element of Pinot's painting, like any other work from one of our collaborators, but only accepting, of course, a *modest and disciplined* collaboration.

If a different scenario crops up, I will refuse to be

1. "The Great Game to Come"
Potlatch n° 30, new series, n° 1.

2. Centered on the "labyrinth."

drawn into the affair, and I will call upon my friends to withdraw as well. Which is to say that things appear to me to have come to a point at which we must anticipate necessary rifts to occur on this question.

Today I am sending, under separate cover, photographs³ for Armando and you. I don't know how well they correspond to the lists that you left in Munich. Sturm brought them to Michèle while I was in Amsterdam. He asked that you send the payment for them directly to *Zimmer*: 15 D. Mark for you and 10 D. Mark for Armando.

Good luck with all the work. Thanks to everyone for the very engaging hospitality in Amsterdam. And see you here soon.

Regards,

3. Of the Munich conference.

Guy

To Constant

[9 June]

Dear Constant,

Here are the texts and notes.

Should I correct the mock-up of *Potlatch*, or are you publishing it immediately?

I hope that the texts and photos for *IS* 3–4 arrive soon.

Regards,

Guy

FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS¹

A collective work from the SI on Unitary Urbanism, including contributions from Alberts (?), Constant, Debord, Oudejans, Wyckaert, etc. (to be published in Amsterdam, in June (?) 1960).

The special issue of *Forum*² (specify the issue and its contents).

A study by Asger Jorn on "The Theory of Value and Its Application in Culture" (to be published in Paris in November 1959).

The next Bibliothèque d'Alexandrie monograph will be devoted to the work of Maurice Wyckaert (?).

1. Attached sheet.

2. *Forum* n° 6 (August 1959). Issue in which the Dutch Situationists explain their position on the unification of the arts and their integration into everyday life.

To Wyckaert

Tuesday, 9 June

Dear Maurice,

All is well here. This morning I returned the corrected texts for *Potlatch* 1¹ to Constant. I hope that he can distribute the print run next week.

Asger wrote me from Monte-Carlo, without explaining what kind of work he is doing there. His show really had a resounding impact: I have even seen confirmation of this from our enemies' camp.

While we were in Holland Sturm brought the series of photos for Armando, Constant, and myself. Nothing for you, nor for Asger. But I'm told that Zimmer should be addressed directly about this. His address is: c/o Neuschmid, Kaulbachstrasse 6.

1. *Potlatch* n°30, new series n° 1, will be published July 15th, 1959.

I haven't yet found a title for your new painting.
Have you?

I hope that we will see one another soon in Antwerp,
and in Amsterdam. But don't forget to stop by here
when you are on your way to Italy—if you are going
there after all?

Best regards to Rob and you,

Guy

P.S. Constant received a letter from poor Pinot with
precise, imperative instructions as to the organization of
the details of “his” show! Constant is rightly indignant.

To Constant

Friday 26 June

Dear Constant,

I have been away from Paris for a few days. I returned
and found your letter; the delay for the first *Potlatch* is
frustrating.

A text¹ is attached that you can naturally change as
you wish. Try to publish the issue very quickly now.

Regarding Pinot

1) His letter to Sandberg is disgusting, since he is
proposing in principle that he will do the show without
you and against you—therefore obviously against the
SI—if he is asked, or merely be accepted in his own right.
It's the same politics as with Drouin, continued and
embellished.

1. “L'IS après deux ans.”

2) Sandberg's response was very good. Very harsh and insulting to Pinot, and it seems to prove once again that Sandberg is greatly interested in a general show from the movement, and that he is therefore not inclined to deal with solitary artistic geniuses, which is the path Pinot is romantically following.

3) I saw Asger—who agrees with us about Amsterdam and about Pinot. Before we meet, Asger had already said clearly to Pinot that any action in Amsterdam would be subordinate to the whole of the movement, thus specifically to the responsibility of the Dutch and even more specifically, to you. I now see the degree to which Pinot took account of these instructions!

Asger will go to Amsterdam when it's necessary—in the fall I think—to discuss the financial questions with Sandberg. But he thinks as I do that the question is rather secondary if we have obtained the support, which matters more than this sum of money.

I'll see you soon in Paris.

Regards to everyone,

Guy

P.S. Har still hasn't sent me the photos from Munich. Try to bring them.

To Jorn

2 July 59

Dear Asger,

I was pleased to receive better news in your last letter.

I still haven't read *La Somme et le Reste*,¹ but I am interested in your critique of the theory of "moments." Could you develop it in a few pages? Not everyone can patiently wait for the completion of the Non-Future! I think that these reflections are at the heart of "Situationist" problems. And these problems—to the extent that they can reach the genuine beyond of negative force that is the preserve of the bourgeois avant-garde—tend toward the revelation of a total perspective on the everyday, to be *shaped* to an even higher degree of complexity. Each provisional formation of everyday life—relatively "plannable" as you say, and to such a level of detail and for its entire unfolding—must *unify* falsely separated categories (love, play, expression, creative thought). And each of these formations—however conscious and calculated it may be, in the sense of being given over to higher risks—inevitably moves towards its own reversal, because each one is wholly experienced along with its negation and permanent supersession in time.

Philosophy, like art—and their need for the *permanent and autonomous unit*, both as a concept and in the perceptible realm—tend toward their disappearance in praxis (for which new modes of intermediary applications need to be found), and not in the pseudo-literary anticipation of a Morin or the pseudo-poetic nostalgia of a Mascolo.² Both of them have certainly understood

1. The philosopher Henri Lefebvre published *La Somme et le Reste* in April 1959.

2. Edgar Morin, sociologist; Dionys Mascolo, writer.

various things, but they won't go beyond their present confusion. Mascolo is hooked on the grotesque debris of Surrealism. And Morin, I saw him the other night presiding over a debate on the cinema—which puts an end to the myth of the rigor of his thought: he's a pawn, like Fougeyrollas.³ A certain unfortunate taste for the authority of the pulpit, it seems to me, explains a good part of their Stalinism and joint revisionism at present.

I only see interest in the thoughts of L. and G.,⁴ which moreover need to be completed (reciprocally as well as from other perspectives).

3. Pierre Fougeyrollas, sociologist.

4. Henri Lefebvre and Lucien Goldmann.

Guy

To Constant

10 July 59

Dear Constant,

I hope to hear from you soon. Is *Potlatch* moving along?

We are still counting on your arrival on July 20th.
Or some day before then?

Regards,

Guy

To Jorn

11 July 59

Dear Asger,

Today I am sending you an issue of *Les Temps modernes* that has an interesting article for your work on value. It is "Reification" by Lucien Goldmann.

Goldmann is very important and original today in independent Marxist thought. He is still relatively little known. But his influence is destined to spread very quickly.

If your brochure presents a critique of Goldmann who touches on the same theme as yours—and if possible the critique of the book by Lukács¹ that you can read in German (Lukács is becoming very fashionable here)—it would be in any case a useful element to your presentation. But of course if you come to agree with Goldmann's conceptions, this would be very positive, at least for our relationship with the Parisian intelligentsia.

Do you have any news about *Mémoires*? From Gugusse² or elsewhere? I need some right now, not only for Wittenborn³ but also for a bookseller that wants to distribute it in Argentina, and *Pour la forme* as well.

I still haven't received the American films! The time lost at this moment is not very serious in itself since the film didn't come out in June and can now only come out in October. But I am nervous about the possible reasons for the delay—and about how much longer it is going to take.

If you pass through Milan, can you find a good bookstore (a non Nuclear⁴ bookstore) that could be the exclusive distributor of the journal in Italy?

Regards,

Guy

1. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*.

2. Augustinci.

3. George Wittenborn, Inc., a distributor and art publisher in New York.

4. A bookstore not linked to the *Movimento per un arte nucleare*.

To Frankin

15 July 59

Dear André,

Good, I will patiently await the Non-Future, Renory, the theory of the Total Novel, etc.,¹ before attaining this coherence in a single bound, when the time, which I hope is near, comes. A single question until then: I think that the expression—the conception—of “planning” individual existence, in your preceding letter, is really yours (and not, for example, Lefebvre’s) and that I can cite it as such?

The latest issue of *Arguments*? Yes, it was never brilliant, nor very consequential, but at the moment we have plumbed new depths—politically as well. The same Mascolo joined in at the worst moment, as if it wasn’t enough for him to be grotesque at the head of the *14 Juillet* intellectual Resistance. On the other hand, I see progress in the last two issues of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, after the departure of Claude Lefort and of the rebel wing of the anti-organizationalists.

In what was the novel’s importance, the fundamental question of time lay, I think—even more than in the choice of certain moments to the exclusion of others—in the freedom to begin and end the story, absolutely, with significant points. This held for the story of a brief isolated affair as much as for the representation of an entire life (*Adolphe*, where exile is also the end of the hero). I think that real everyday life would have to aim at appropriating this form of sovereignty (of a trifling nature and, for the most part, usage in the novel).

It seems to me that the same question of time is posed in a similar manner in the cinema, which is another

1. Cf. “Esquisses programmatiques,” *IS* n° 4, p. 16.

form of the representation of the temporal unfolding of things. In cinema as in the novel the interest lies wherever the alienating satisfactions of the spectacle can at the same time be outlines, in negative, for a planned development of affective life, which is to say of affective events inseparable from thought and action.

Say hello to Claude² when you see him. Sincerely,

2. Claude Frère.

Guy

To Constant

Wednesday Evening [15 July]

Dear Constant,

I just got your letter.

A brief, frantically rushed word, regarding the first *Potlatch*.

It would be better if the 20 or 30 copies that should be sent *individually* were sent from Amsterdam. This emphasizes the autonomy and the responsibility of the Dutch section—and also, for the outside world, more effectively indicates the transition to another sphere of activity from that of the old *Potlatch*.

So prepare the envelopes now and mail them before leaving Amsterdam—I only emphasize all of this in case you were thinking we would distribute them from Paris.

We will expect you Monday evening. Regards,

Guy

P.S. Bring all the materials—texts, photos—that you can obtain for

- a) the project at Stedelijk Museum
- b) editing n° 3–4 of the journal

To Jorn—Albisola M. (Savona)

27 July 59, 22h15

WARM CONGRATULATIONS ON THE SECOND
ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE SI.

Signed: Bernstein, Constant, Debord

Telegram

To Chantal Delattre¹

Paris, 4 August 1959

Dear Chantal,

While making our film, decidedly experimental from beginning to end, a new element has just come up that is much more extraordinary than the others.

Korber,² in a rush to get me some German and French films which he claimed to have had at his place since the end of June, came and gave me empty boxes, which is to say boxes filled with mere sound tracks sent not long ago by Monsavon along with his film reels. Finding himself thus caught red-handed, he openly admitted that hadn't done a thing since the end of May;

1. Editor for the first two short films by Guy Debord.

2. Serge Korber, an assistant director at that time.

nothing but obtain a few small sums under the pretext of guarantees to be paid, sums that he joyfully embezzled, but which seem to be barely more than 70 [000] or 80,000 francs.

This occurrence is so surprising (not so much from the point of view of the indignant moralist, but because of its pitiful character and from the fact that Korber obviously chose to make a bad deal) that I thought it a good idea to have a written confession, with the single purpose of eventually persuading those among the collaborators on this film—not to mention the producers—who might, quite rightly, doubt such an unlikely story.

We have since seen the astonishing chap reveal his true colors and assert very loudly that he would *never* write down what he had just verbally confirmed to with such good grace. He probably intended to misrepresent the modest facts by once again spreading some more favorable myths. But in the end his refusal only lasted two or three minutes, and I have it in writing.

What I don't have of course is the description of the shots from the films—what my new assistant³ is going to bring together! Which is to say your famous notebook: handsome Serge, as you imagine, did not waste his time copying it, since he had no intention of ordering the films.

So, can you get the notebook to me? Or if it is still at your place and if there is someone there at this moment, deliver it to me? Response to this is urgent.

Otherwise, when will you be returning to Paris—without taking this frustrating news into account? We are doing the editing September 15th, come what may.

Very sincerely,

To Constant

21 August

Dear Constant,

I hope that the business with the tower is entirely guaranteed, despite the need to do a more complex project. I think, however, that it should only be announced in our publications the moment its construction is officially decided (and then we can start a large publicity campaign about it). Will you have that assurance by the time *Potlatch* 2 appears? Or only the journal?

I will send texts for *Potlatch* next week.

I am waiting for the journal *Forum*. You should mention that special issue in *Potlatch* of course, since it will have appeared or be about to.

For our future work on urbanism, I don't know what title should be chosen (something very simple, like "Unitary Urbanism"), but "*Critique of urbanism*" should certainly be added as a subtitle. Because we must refuse to be enclosed in this body of doctrine, in this closed and partial domain (infinitely larger and more interesting than painting, but just as *isolated* as painting by those who have determined its theories and practical construction). Among our architect friends, for example, we should beware of a tendency to be innovative urbanists without dealing with the rest of it (i.e. in actual fact remaining conformists in regard to the other problems, therefore depriving themselves of a truly innovative development in urbanism).

Regarding the architects:

1) Can we be sure of having at least a good article from Har and Alberts by the beginning of September?

2) When will Har send me the photos he promised?

Have you already discussed the April event, and the structure of our labyrinthine construction in particular?

For the same events, I think that now it would be good to have a translation of my *Report* in Dutch (it might serve as material for one of the recorded lectures). Can you take care of it? It isn't a pressing task. I could send you a slightly amended version. And, later, I will write a very short 1960 preface, rectifying 3 or 4 errors of detail, and evaluating current perspectives.

Maurice told me that he was coming today, but at the last moment he canceled. No other news of situationists on vacation. I am working, but less quickly than I should.

Regards to you all (Michèle sends her love),

Guy

To Claude Frère,

Paris, 24 August 1959

Dear Claude,

Frankin has sent me what you have written about Serge.¹ I see that Serge confessed, at least to you, his little *détournement*. But he gave you a detailed explanation likely to justify it. You're spreading that alibi without other verification and you seem to believe and let it be thought that it is true and recognized as such by everyone. But it so happens that your good faith has been grossly betrayed.

1. Serge Korber.

Outside of any question of judgment, moral or in regard to his character, the facts have been completely invented by Serge. Let me be clear:

1) Never for a minute was there a question of Serge being codirector of my film. My whole technical team can testify to this. Serge had no idea and still has absolutely no idea about the outline of the film, its shots, commentary, and even its precise subject. His job, as a mere underling, was rather broad: establish an estimate, gather a crew, assist during filming, and thereafter handle the contracts for purchasing the film clips that I always selected on my own. The only equality foreseen between us was that of salary (700,000 F each, sharing profits). I am myself an employee on the film and as the producers are my friends it would have seemed awkward and petty to establish a complex hierarchy of salaries. I aligned myself with the best paid employee (in the end two others switched their profit sharing salary for a much lesser set wage).

Besides, why would I have shared the responsibility for a film, particularly of this kind, with just anyone? And particularly with Serge, who certainly does not have the same ideas that I do about cinema? I say certainly because we have never even had an exhaustive discussion on the subject. Whether Serge is or is not “capable of making a film” doesn’t concern me. I am not a producer. If in the end he gets some money, he is undoubtedly capable of making a film.² But not mine, if I can help it ... And then you know very well that his main ambition is diametrically opposed to that: he wants to make *Le Carabinier de Bologne*.³

2) Even if I had had the strange notion about collaboration that Serge retrospectively invented for me, it would have been very difficult to accomplish.

Whatever you and Serge think, I have no personal or family fortune. There are people who can entrust me

2. Films like *La Petite Vertu* (1967) and *Cherchez l'erreur* (1980).

3. A novel by Claude Frère published by Gallimard in 1956.

with money, because of various things that I have done, but only for a job which I direct entirely and for which I am solely responsible. Whatever one thinks of the motives of these people, that's the way it is. But not for Serge, whose friends are entirely different. Is it really necessary to make it clear that Serge has never had the slightest thing to do with what you call "situationism"? I understand perfectly that one might find this kind of preoccupation incomprehensible, or even plain stupid. But neither I nor my comrades are looking for a favorable judgment or support of any kind from the public, cultivated or not. You know perfectly well that I have never given Serge the slightest opportunity to enter into a discussion about this—any more than any of the other technicians on my film, any more than you. This is not a question of value, or of greater or lesser intelligence, etc.—but, practically, of specialization (I should make it clear that when I am talking about our specialization, I can discern therein not so much a merit as a restriction).

Of course, if a certain talent for disdain, which seems to offend you about me, should become an issue, it is in regard to an individual who is trying to give the impression that he has found himself in opposition in a debate into which he has not even been admitted.

3) Serge didn't leave "tracks that are still in the production office!" In fact, they refused to give him these tracks (the main one, at the beginning of May, during a trip to Frankfurt to a Mr. Goldschmidt ... I can show you a letter from this gentleman). Serge did not dare admit his failure—though he was only guilty of some reckless forecasting, which can happen to anyone. And since then he has gathered lies and delays to hide it. After more than six weeks of dissimulation he has received 40,000 F under false pretexts. And it has been another six weeks after this little

theft (which is therefore only a ridiculous addendum to his true abuse of confidence) that he was caught in the act of returning two well-wrapped dummy reels to me, in hopes of gaining still more time until the editing. So you are extremely wide of the mark if you imagine Serge proudly (albeit poorly, since he swapped his whole salary for this theft) content to avenge himself for a moral affront.

4) I must say that there is no direct relationship between Serge's behavior (which I persist, all things considered, in qualifying as lamentable) on my film and the filming of *Carabinier*. The relationship, entirely indirect, is in the ever increasing mythomania of the person in question.

The much postponed filming of your novel in its originally guaranteed full-length, and then suddenly shortened state, remained set for August 15th until the very beginning of August, against all good faith, duping the members of his future team, and locking their schedule. Then, still early in August, Serge told them that he had definitely given up on the project, even though he had all the money, but because his freedom had been curtailed (?). Then a few days later came the explanation of the quality bonus that would not come until September, an equivalent (?) of which it was impossible to have before a month was out, and which therefore put off the whole thing perhaps until Christmas? Or spring? In short, I really hope that your novel comes to the screen. The only thing that Serge's optimism has lacked is money.

Besides, I've known Serge for about 10 months and I've seen vanish without trace or explanation several assured and official commissions he had managed to land for the direction—always within a six-week time-frame—of documentaries

a) on the grocery business

- b)) on oil exploration techniques in the Sahara
 - c) on Corsica
 - d) on his producer's dog
 - e) on four singers from some record company or other.
- Don't you remember at least a few of them?

But I've seen better. The very day after the day (Monday August 3rd) that I fired him in as calm and tactful a manner as I could, Serge called me early in the morning to be rehired, not as co-director of course but as second assistant this time. He used the following blackmail: having his producer (Armor) in his hand, he tried hard, and in a variety of ways, to stop me obtaining certain films from Cosmopolis; but on the contrary, if I went through him again, he might finally set things moving—with Armor—to get them for me. I have the habit of never going back after a break, so I hung up instantly. Moreover, it was a bluff as idiotic as the others, as my new assistant could verify immediately by going to Armor, who could not and did not want to do any such thing, happily enough for the state of their premises and their persons.

More humorous still, while we're at it: last week the editor for my film, Chantal Delattre, told us that Serge claimed, five or six months ago in conversation with the same group of filmmakers, to be your lover and about to marry you—but said that he was frustrated from taking you out more often by your parents, with whom you were living! In sum, your real future spouse had no role in this picture. There are some people greener than we think and whose humor—even verbal— isn't everlasting.

Excuse the length of this clarification; I hope that it at least makes things clear. The accumulation of details is rather comic, as is the basis of the tale (which is neither a single nor a double "drama of confidence." But each one of these details is verifiable.

I have no intention of making you more hostile to poor Serge. What for? It even seems to me that, in order to maintain your trust in him, despite the various suspect things that you yourself will doubtless have noticed, you have been somewhat content to explain away Serge's notorious deception by means of another—moral—deception in which he was supposedly the victim beforehand. But in the end, we have a few friends in common. And it isn't appropriate for you to judge this business, knowingly and honestly, when you only have a one-sided view of it—and one whose point of departure was precisely an accusation of mythomaniacal lying against your informer.

In conclusion, two eventualities remain equally possible: if this business only concerns your friendship with Serge, what I am writing to you now is more than sufficient—you will admit it or not, and you will explain it to yourself as you wish.

If, on the other hand, you want to speak of this story to others with some objectivity, I am ready to offer in person whatever clarifications you might still desire, and provide some instructive eye-witness accounts—particularly those of the crew on my film.

This will be as you please, but clear.

Kindest regards,

Guy Debord

P.S. I am sending a copy of this letter to Frankin at the same time to clarify the whole problem without further ado.

To Wolsgaard-Iversen¹

Paris, 2 September 1959

Dear Herman,

I hope that Dansk-Fransk is now officially established, because I need to use its letterhead for my purposes.

I've had every imaginable difficulty with the film production companies who refused almost uniformly to sell us the rights for clips of their films.

Panicked by the unforeseen obstacles, my assistant, Korber, did his job very poorly (not wanting to admit certain refusals that he encountered), and even misappropriated a small sum of money. Such that I fired him in disgrace. There is no further need to pay him his salary, which was nevertheless rather high. At least from the financial point of view it's to our advantage.

Now, happily, I think I have reached the end. I will undoubtedly be able to put the film in your hands at the beginning of October.

Will I see you soon?

Kind regards. Our best wishes to your wife.

Guy

P.S. If you received letters addressed to DFEK through Copenhagen, you should send them to me in Paris as quickly as possible. *Thanks in advance.*

Otherwise should I send you a package of your letterhead?

1. Herman Wolsgaard-Iversen, Danish journalist, producer for the Dansk-Fransk Experimentalfilms Kompagni (DFEK), created by Jorn.

To Constant

Monday 7 September

Dear Constant,

Here is the text on automobiles.¹ When do you think *Pot-latch* will come out? It shouldn't really be after September 15th (it has already been two months since the first issue).

Do I need to correct some of the texts?

Now speaking of the journal.

1) I don't have the photos from Har. He needs to send them to me.

2) Send your text as soon as possible.

3) We need to get a text on Amsterdam, from Alberts at least. You should see them, he and Oudejans, and urge them to get this done. It's really a shame that you haven't met with Har since your return from Paris. Save in cases where an open break is necessary, I think that we should be patient and encourage the people who can do a lot to work. (Tell him that I think I understand what he means by *topology*—or at least that I think that he was the one who mentioned it in Munich. It is very interesting and could perhaps replace the less firm notion of psycho-geography: the two cover the same domain.)

Similarly, we need the signatures from the Dutch, with yours, under the attack against Cobra.²

I think the project of the special issue of the journal that we decided to do on unitary urbanism has gotten off to a bad start. Precisely those texts are the ones that I am still missing! It must be admitted that the discord, or absence of work, in Holland immediately and objectively reinforces the "individual art" side of the SI.

On this topic, allow me to say that I am surprised

1. "Positions situationnistes sur la circulation" *IS* n° 3, p. 36.

2. This is regarding neo-Cobra.

that after such a worrying report, you have renewed your attacks against Tachism and our painter friends. Tachism is no longer even an “avant-garde” style here: its final blossoming in Holland hardly matters.

For the painters, the question depends entirely on *us*, on our *action*. This is not a question of persuasion, or of morality. The present association, in the SI, has been made, as you know, on the *most advanced* principles (yours and mine; not those of Prem or Gallizio, obviously). This has given us a certain platform from which we must either do something or not. The “painters” have never bothered us (since the exclusion of Simondo) as such, neither by their success drawing the movement into a school of painting, nor by their opinions on our problems.

The question is only: can we do something new? What we aspire to, as collective activity, and where several painters (Wyckaert!) are determined to follow us? If we are incapable (we, because a true situationist recruitment has not been carried out), then that means that the *movement is premature!* And it should have nothing more to say to painters ...

It seems clear to me: I don’t have the right—and I do not have the least desire—to try to impose directives and values on painters (for instance) *except in the name of a real movement that is more advanced than their work*, a movement in which they can choose to participate. For want of *real work* from such a movement, I have nothing to say to painters—neither for nor against—because I don’t want to be an art critic, and that would be a waste of time for them and for me. (This would be true integration into a *school* of painting, or *antipainting*.)

So far I have done the best I can with the journal. It’s not much. But we have published several texts (including yours) that in thirty years will still be the basis for the creative movement that will not fail to constitute itself.

But if it doesn't come together for another ten years or more, that would be unfortunate ...

I am in complete agreement about being as strict as necessary in the Amsterdam show. Because this show will decide the fate of the movement as a whole—and, in the worst case scenario, in a definitive manner! In fact, this isn't about a show, it's about a new construction. I don't think that it helps to be optimistic about this.

What technical means are available to us? In themselves, they are nothing: a new art is required for their arrangement, not as works of art obviously, but as practices.

Naturally—and this has been clearly established, as much for Sandberg as for Jorn—no one will participate other than as a *disciplined* collaborator (and you are in charge—and therefore at ease). But we need to have a larger discussion and association of ideas than the extremely pared-down, conventional plan—all told very beautifully aesthetic—that you proposed to me in six lines in your letter !

I remain in favor of the formula from my *Report*: “By all means, even artistic ones.”

But only in so far as they are real means. Within the ambiance we don't need to do a *show* of works—even so-called “industrial” ones, because if even these were to benefit from a certain scandalous value, they couldn't be presented as a scandal in this specific structure.

Forgive the confusion of my letter, I am very rushed.

Regards. And send your articles quickly.

Guy

P.S. What is happening with the tower? One certainty from that quarter will be a very strong argument to reinforce the SI's wheeling flank.

Bring me up to date.

To Constant

16 September 59

Dear Constant,

Our exchange of letters proves that we understand one another very well.

Naturally my rather “optimistic” report (*The SI After Two Years*¹) is only for the purposes of *internal propaganda*. And I would not write anything like it for anything but *Potlatch*. Otherwise I leave you free to edit as you wish, or even to suppress the article.

I am in complete agreement about an appeal to architects. The best form of words must be studied—ideologically and also in practice (languages, lists of addresses, etc.), and issued as soon as possible—in the name of the SI, which can only be strengthened by a success like this (though we should avoid the appeal being misunderstood or falling on deaf ears), I mean strengthened in the way that interests us.

For the text “Situationist Positions on Traffic” I agree to publishing it *signed* in our collective work, or even in the journal. I only think that *in Potlatch* it would be better to publish it unsigned, to give it the general weight of the movement—save in the case that the polemic gained momentum in Holland, even between us and Alberts-Oudejans. So, I leave you free to sign it with my name, if you think it useful. But I would prefer—for the current polemic against the other Dutch architects—a *translation of the text into Dutch*, appearing as a roneotyped tract, and then signed. Meanwhile the same text in French in *Potlatch* would remain anonymous.

1. cf. Letter from 26 June 1959.

I have a lot of work to do. I will write at greater length next time. (I am counting on your article on urbanism—and *Forum?*)

I end with an important practical detail:

I received the photos from Alberts only 4 days ago. *But*, these photos are those of *faces* (Pinot, Gretel Stadler, you, me, etc.). There were 6. And only 2 photos of the group! (The one I had proposed for the first issue of *Potlatch*, and one where we were around a tape recorder). Head shots of any of us are of no use to me. *I asked for all the photos of the group*. Stupidity or sabotage? Clarify the situation, quickly. Beyond that, the extremely poor proofs of the photos that Alberts sent me won't allow me to make copies! Try to have a group of good proofs of the group photos sent to me immediately. *There were at least 10 or 12 photos of the group, almost all of them excellent!* They could *at least* do that for us.

Regards,

Guy

To Jorn

17 September 1959

Dear Asger,

Pinot spoke to me about Pistoï.

The whole of the new attitude toward him can undoubtedly be justified, save on one point.

In the second issue of our journal, it reads (page 30):

“The intellectual rabble in Italy, among certain

nauseating elements like the dealer Pistoï, editor of the journal *Notizie* ... have understood and clearly revealed their true allegiance: Michel Tapié ... the priests that they cannot forget.”

Now, Pinot is to publish a text in the next issue of *Notizie*.

Don't you think that such a flagrant contradiction will lead to some breaks among the current situationists? (I still don't know exactly between who and whom, but the thing doesn't seem doubtful to me.)

In case it's impossible to withdraw the text, I herewith renounce my responsibility for any regrettable consequences.

Regards,

Guy¹

1. A note from Pinot follows; “My very dear Asger,

Here things are going very well. I am here after dinner with Guy and Michèle. I agree with Debord's letter and I hope to arrange things. See you soon, Pinot.”

To Constant

Tuesday, 22 September 59

Dear Constant,

Since my last letter, to which I still haven't received a response (photos from Oudejans), I saw Gallizio, who is traveling alone for a few days in Paris.

According to what he tells me—I feel it is *extremely urgent* to release *Potlatch* n° 2 *including our combined attack against neo-Cobra and Dutch modern art*. In effect, Pinot told me that in Venice (at the “living art” show, organized by the industrialist Marinotti¹ and *Sandberg*) everything was devoted to Appel,² who

1. The industrialist Paolo Marinotti, an Italian textile baron.

2. The painter Karel Appel.

showed certain works—with fabric—entitled “ambiances” or even “situation.”

In itself, the fact that we have been *détourned* by ridiculous external enemies is not dangerous—in any case less dangerous than if such a *détournement* was carried out by situationists. But Jorn is, it seems, worried about Sandberg’s maneuvers to establish his Dutch artists—by any means—as leaders of modern art. He is even worried about our event in Amsterdam. I was able to reassure Pinot by telling him that we, you and I, had immediately reached similar conclusions about Sandberg’s game, and that our withering attack would appear shortly in *Potlatch* n° 2. Which is to say that we will do the exhibit in Amsterdam only with complete freedom and according to our plans, *with Sandberg’s help*, but *against his ideas*. I also said that in a way we have lightheartedly taken the risk of calling off the whole business in Amsterdam if Sandberg is inordinately affected by this attack (in my opinion this would only clarify things, and reinforce our position).

So I attach the greatest importance to the settlement of this question—if possible within the next week—through the mailing of *Potlatch* n° 2 (if necessary without photographic illustrations).

And all the more so because I heard talk of Pinot possibly publishing a text in the sinister Pistoï’s journal *Notizie*, I warned him that that publication wouldn’t take place without occasioning some breaks within the SI. He has therefore promised to withdraw the text. But we need to be prepared for a beneficial crisis—and consequently, have settled once and for all the other contentious question, especially since it is effectively the solution that we ourselves adopted in Paris.

I am writing this very quickly in a café in Pigalle. I am going back to edit my film, which will be finished next week. Finally!

Then I will be busy bringing out the journal—for which I am still awaiting your “urbanistic” text and the group photos from Oudejans.

Regards,

Guy

To Wolsgaard-Iversen

[22 September 59]

Dear Herman,

The responsibilities of the perfect producer are:

- 1) To win, most often, at poker.
- 2) To meet a great number of people who are important in cinematographic distribution or in television (particularly in America). To persuade them that you have just produced an experimental film the likes of which they have never seen—which is the most basic definition of an experimental film, but extremely rare all the same.
- 3) To show them the initial print the moment you receive it; convince them to pay as much as possible for the rights in their respective countries. Then to bring the money to Paris, each time minus the 30% Asger arranged for the shrewd producer (get this percentage to work for him at the poker table).

I should finish the editing next week and my work ends there. Including the final manipulations in the lab, you should have the film around October 15th. I hope that the DFEK has been officially constituted in

Copenhagen, because the legal debates over the nationality of the film might begin one of these days.

All our best to Matty and you,

Guy

To Constant

Friday 25 September

Dear Constant,

Thanks a lot for the photos. They're perfect. Thank Har for me.

I hope we will have the assurance soon that you are going to undertake the construction of the tower. I see this as the starting point for a future campaign among the situationists in favor of the construction—or, at least, of models. Carrying out just one, even very roughly, would give a much greater allure of *reality* to the discussions on possible architectures.

I am very pleased that Har has promised a text on urbanism. A reminder that, for this text, *as for yours*, I must have the manuscripts *no later than October 15th*. (And as early as possible before then. Make an effort.)

In agreement with you about the Essen show.¹ But I think this is precisely one of the risks—or even one of the negative obligations of our current action. It is up to us, one can say once again, to make up for and to surpass it through a mass of truly new theoretical and practical contributions, radically placed on the cultural terrain of the future. Jorn himself is very discreet with galleries regarding his relations with the SI, because he knows that

1. Constant, "Konstruktionen und Modelle," that will take place January 9th, 1960, at the Van de Loo Gallery.

we are not looking for this kind of publicity—which we cannot, in any case, entirely reject, since it is one of the aspects of our troubled current position, and mixed with the past and new ambitions. And of course, the galleries abhor the SI, and avoid citing its name to whatever degree possible: this is very good. Van de Loo is perhaps the most dangerous, because the most “intelligent” and “advanced” of the *dealers* with whom some of us have business. But if you look at the attached invitation you can see that the Van de Loo case remains very isolated.

Meanwhile we also need to beware of the dangerous Sandberg-Marinotti trust, of which I spoke in my previous letter. It seems that their goals might be rather different: Sandberg might want to present an innovative scandalous movement (and he will try to link it officially with Cobra)—it’s up to us to do something with this. Marinotti, on the contrary, is absolutely opposed to scandal, and to every “movement” in general. He only wants to *buy* Jorn—and undoubtedly the industrial painting of the innocent Gallizio. It therefore seems that Marinotti (Gallizio *dixit*) would like to “discard” me (because of the *Report*) and, of course, every organized movement. It is very comical, and can only serve to discard others, whom we will send off to bootlick Marinotti-Drouin and other patrons. I think that Jorn has really understood the Marinotti business. Gallizio perhaps less so—or rather, he pretends not to have understood. Appel seems the pawn common to all of these players. He’s the hero in comrade Marinotti’s “Situationism”! So, I insist that mailing *Potlatch* n° 2 is urgent, with the scheduled article on Cobra.

Best regards,

Guy

To Constant

Saturday 3 October

Dear Constant,

Once again a note in haste, to ask for news on several rather pressing points.

1) When will *Potlatch* n° 2 appear?

2) Do you think you can have a close-up photo overhanging the “labyrinth” part of the model made for me to make a copy for the printer? If yes, the sooner the better.

3) When will I have the texts on urbanism? The final possible deadline seems to me to be in two weeks—Saturday October 18th.¹ But it would be much better to have them before then—and the moment they are finished.

4) Do you have any sure news about the tower, permitting mention already in the journal?

5) Likewise, can *Forum* be mentioned? Has it come out? When will I receive it?

Best regards,

Guy

1. In fact, Saturday, October 17th.

To Constant

Monday [5 October]

Dear Constant,

I agree about publishing the article on traffic in the journal. *I have a copy of it*: keep yours. I already thought

about this before receiving your letter. I intend to include it (with “The Great Game to Come”) in a section that *reprints*—with a larger distribution—the best texts published in *Potlatch*. Thus all the texts have the superior cachet of having already been published elsewhere (in another situationist center)—and at the same time we are creating publicity for the limited edition *Potlatch*, which in my opinion should absolutely remain a weapon in our hands, even in this very modest form, to later perhaps become a publication of 8 to 10 pages addressed very selectively to 80 or 100 people, with the progress of our action among architects and urbanists.

So I would also ask for the publication of the “Situationist Positions on Traffic” in the next *Potlatch*—with my signature or anonymously, as you see fit.

I think that there will be a *slight* delay for the journal because of finances. This can immediately offer us another week for editorial work. But I am counting all the more on your important participation—which should now reach me by October 30th.

Regards to all of you,

Guy

To Constant

7 October

Dear Constant,

Here is not the duplicate but the *only* copy of our letter that I sent you so that you can hand it to Sandberg,

who can send it adding his recommendation (he should certainly mention that he's the one who put us on the track of the "Prins Bernhard Fonds?").

I have no idea about the cost (what the book will be). Have a printer in Amsterdam do a rather large estimate.

I too am overwhelmed with work these days. Forgive the brevity of this response.

I hope that everything is going well that way?

See you very soon,

Guy

To Constant

Thursday 8 October

Dear Constant,

OK for publishing the clarification on Cobra in the journal. But I think that it would have made more sense to publish it in *Potlatch*, then reprint it in *IS* with a comment that would have driven the point home even more.

In any case, it will be necessary to publish *Potlatch* immediately. I believe that you already have enough texts? Make the cuts that you want, and if needed, reduce the bulletin to a single sheet, front and back. I think that *Potlatch* can be a useful weapon (inexpensive, and defining our continuity since 1954) with all the crises and divisions that might come up very soon in the SI.

This periodic publication must not be dropped—and it has already been three months since the first issue appeared!

I think as far as Cobra goes, everyone around us is in agreement. There is certainly a misunderstanding here: where did you see that Jorn denied your role in Cobra? I don't know anything about this. You should reread the editorial note (in *IS* n° 2) entitled "What Cobra's Friends Are..." First, so as to avoid repeating certain arguments that have already been used in the attack that you want to make. And also to verify that your role here is presented as essential: that article was entirely approved by Jorn (who should even be considered a cosigner since he already figures in the editorial board of the journal).

These eternal discussions of Cobra's heritage need to come to an end. This is how we ourselves end up overestimating the movement, and its meaning. If Appel now parodies a certain situationist formulation (I don't really call that "gently inserting himself into our positions"), he is doing what Michel Tapié and others did. And no one needs to ask Jorn's authorization for this ...

I would be very pleased with *Forum*—the summary from your account, on the first page, contrasts very nicely with the dullness of various other opinions on this question—if I hadn't found (at least I think so, despite my surprise) your article, page 184, illustrated with two snapshots of a mock-up of a *church* by Har and Alberts! I imagine that one might think that it is a parody, a mockery of the church as a modern building (a bit like how we proposed for one of your models the purpose: "new Stedelijk Museum"). But it is ultimately very ambiguous and suspect.

It is *impossible* to build a church from the barely coherent perspective of modern urbanism. And this not only morally and politically; but for directly architectural, urbanistic reasons. On the terrain of unitary urbanism,

one clearly sees how all these positions link up: morality and building form one inseparable unity. One cannot say that a dogmatism, or an ideological fanaticism, *prevents* certain solutions or experiences. The perspective of unitary urbanism provides the perfect explanation for the total failure of all buildings of this type. A failure that is already evident and *comical* in the photograph of the model. The comic character probably saves Har and Alberts. But they need to declare it themselves clearly.

Where would we be if the decomposed forces of the Church, in its modernist tendency, take them at their word and propose they build a real church? It behoves us to approach these questions only with a clear attitude of insult and contempt.

The ambiguity here could be really detrimental to us. The worst anarchist pictorial confusion will be reinforced and will prevail on a long-term basis if we can see falsifiers claim to arrive at an era of new construction, and begin by grounding their projects on the oldest rot of alienated existence. I think that Har and Alberts are very likeable and interesting. They are obviously intelligent. They can follow this reasoning, I hope. Do what's best about this, but don't forget that it is an issue that might, as it develops, necessitate a complete break.

I'm expecting the photos and the texts as soon as possible. I am now working solely on the journal.

Regards,

Guy

To Constant

Friday [16 October]

Dear Constant,

Quite obviously, I wish to make it clear that I never considered this unfortunate church an illustration you were responsible for! It is the epitome of a layout through which editorial sabotage might *détourn*, in a journal, the best text. This is what forces us to be prudent when collaborating with journals that we don't control, because we must act on the principle that many people will be vastly more determined to talk about us if they can do so in a manner that blurs our real problems and that compromises us. Alberts certainly has a disquieting responsibility in part as an organizer of this issue, but above all because someone must have provided that photo. And why choose that one from all the ones of his and Oudejan's models?

It is obvious that their excuse (indifference to the purpose in the general problem of a model of a church) is extremely open to criticism, not only from the point of view of unitary urbanism, but even at the level of classical urbanism. The occasion even signals a reversion to a kind of art for art school of free formalism; a little like what the architectural ideology of the Imaginist Bauhaus would have been, if Simondo's secret Catholicism had been a more dominant part of it!

I do think that their "sculpture," probably objectively, and still more in their minds, seems like a mockery of the idea of a church. But insofar as we can give them the benefit of the doubt, it is absolutely opposed to the first point of the Amsterdam Declaration. I think that this critique

will have to be developed in the future, and we must be wary of a certain cynical opportunism among architects.

I agree that Jorn's signature beneath the dubious German manifesto is suspect and unfortunate.¹ It must be said, moreover, that he gave me a first draft of the text that was rather different. The manuscript that he signed was changed thereafter—by whom?—into a more confusing and retrograde meaning (though the first version was already partially unacceptable). All this was before the Munich conference. But the basis of the problem is this “open door tactic” that Jorn and Gallizio are trying to apply everywhere. I have always been against it. I don't see what reinforcement this German group brings us, if anything, I see just the opposite. This is a question of being vigilant regarding the development of things in Munich. As it seems more and more that they haven't made any progress, one can perhaps soon foresee expulsions as a result?

In any case, since Munich, even more than before, I have systematically refused to receive just anyone who comes to speak to me about the SI if they have not first presented proof of their interest. In this way I have managed, politely or otherwise, to get rid of seven people directly (I am not counting those that never went beyond telephone calls or letters). Pinot is always the main recruiter. And it seems to me that we already have amongst us too many young artistic elderly who have missed out on their own 19th century.

The best we can achieve, for the moment, is an interesting and unambiguous issue of the journal. I am expecting your mailing next week. Afterward I propose that we think about simultaneously 1) the call to architects and urbanists, and 2) organizing the show at the Stedelijk Museum.

Regards. I hope that we will see one another soon.

Guy

1. cf. letter from 12 November 1958.

To Gallizio

4 November 59

My dear Pinot,

As you must have seen, I translated certain points of your "Discourse"¹ rather freely, to try to give it a spoken tone. I think that the result, from this perspective, is good. The French translation will appear in the issue of our journal that should be printed soon.

Thank you for sending *Notizie*. As I feared, the compromise (publishing the text as "supplement") is hardly satisfying since Pistoi, in his presentation, obviously didn't make it clear that the "supplement" signified an aloofness chosen by the Alba Laboratory.

I met Soshana Bollag once, because she led me to believe, over the telephone, that she wanted some practical advice as to the arrangement with Facchetti.² But in fact it was only to have me "talk about situationism" with two of her friends, and you know how bored I am by this type of meeting. Bollag also took the opportunity to air some Hindu beliefs, accompanied by some propaganda in favor of the reincarnation of souls; indeed such a profound and annoying lot of idiotic chatter that I remained polite only out of regard for you and your projects. A few days later, she called me again to have me meet other friends, but fortunately I was out. At that point, I sent her a young painter, thinking that she could perhaps buy an inexpensive canvas from him—or help him to sell one to someone else. But she rudely showed him the door, saying that she was herself a painter! As you can imagine, after she has treated someone sent by me in this manner, I find myself no longer under any obligation to put up with this bloody

1. Published in Italy in October 1959 as *Per un'arte unitaria applicabile*, the "Discourse on Industrial Painting and on Applicable Unitary Art" will appear in *IS* n° 3, p. 31.

2. Paul Facchetti, owner of a gallery on the rue de Lille.

nuisance ever again. Stupidly she called two or three times since then to speak to me; I told her that I didn't have time.

I don't know what happened to Cuixard in São Paulo. I expect to receive your tract (many copies, if possible) and I will do my best to promote it here.

Best regards to all of you, with the German friends.

Guy

To Constant

4 November

Dear Constant,

Thanks for the text! I am extremely pleased with the development, the formulations, and the illustrations.¹ Therein lies one of the fundamental directions for the structure of a city conceived by Unitary Urbanism (it's undoubtedly the most *advanced*. We should also consider other projects.)

At a lower level, I would oppose the stilt configuration under the *houses*—but on this audacious point the whole town becomes a single palace on stilts, where a *dérive* can extend in three dimensions. Excellent.

I am attaching to this letter some notes on very slight corrections to the text. For the illustrations, agreed. But just a reminder that I would like an *enlarged detail viewed from above* of the “labyrinth” portion of the other model. Can you have it made immediately? I am publishing the photo of the whole, and would like to have the general view and the detail *together*.

1. Cf. Constant's article “Another City for Another Life,” *IS* n° 3, p. 37.

For “Critique of Urbanism,” I am thinking of giving you:

- 1) An assemblage of several previously published paragraphs from various articles on Unitary Urbanism.
- 2) the text on traffic.
- 3) a study of (psychogeographical) *hubs*, since you asked for it.

By when?

—and, additionally if you want, the preface “Constant and the Path of the U.U.”?

Are you okay for making a Dutch translation of the *Report*—in which case I could prepare a corrected version for that purpose? This is, of course, another problem (for a lecture at Sandberg’s).

The journal will certainly be delayed—to the end of November?—by the delay of the forthcoming situationist money. But since the editing isn’t completed, the faults are still very divided.

Once these problems with the delays are behind us, we will need to devote ourselves to the preparations for our show at Sandberg’s. 5 months have already gone by—out of 12—and no one has done anything to advance the project.

I have given more thought to the project for a “Unitary Urbanism Manifesto,” which would be supported by a film. And more and more I think that this would be very striking and positive if the financial questions are solved—which is difficult. I have already found the principle cinematographic methods that would allow for accompaniment and for a discursive manifesto *to be read*; a manifesto which it is quite simple and necessary to write in the near future.

I am still in favor—before even the Stedelijk Museum show—of preparing a call to architects and urbanists.

I am also still in favor of the urgent publication of *Potlatch*, as I remind you insistently.

Regards. And see you soon, I hope.

Guy

To Constant

[18 November]

Dear Constant,

I need to receive the photo by Monday morning at the latest (that is the day I turn in all the negatives to be made).

Jorn is here. We should have the journal out within the next two weeks!

On the other side, Pinot's latest showing.¹

You see why I really want to have a center in Amsterdam for *regular* information about the SI.

See you soon,

Guy

1. Tract signed by Gallizio and the Spur group: *Difendiamo la libertà*, against the painter Modesto Cuixard, grand prize winner in São Paulo in 1959, accused of having denounced the painters Saura and Tapiés as Communists (cf. *IS*.n° 3, p. 18).

To Wyckaert

Wednesday 18 November

Dear Maurice,

Asger just got back to Paris, after a European tour in both directions. We spoke about the release of the monograph about you, which should be done quickly. Asger thinks that you have already had negatives made by Heimburger, but do you?

In any case, if this has not already been sent, you can send

to M. Heimburger

Frederiksborggade 5 Copenhagen

all the photographs that you want, indicating the format for the negatives. For the format of the monograph—and also, a little later, for its thickness—you should follow the example of the monograph on Constant. Write that you are sending this at Jorn's request. And don't worry about asking for larger images, wherever you want them. Only, at the same time, you should send Heimburger a canvas as a gift.

We are thinking we can release the journal within a couple of weeks.

Regards to you and Rob,

Guy

To Constant

Thursday 26 November 59

Dear Constant,

I just returned from Munich where I went looking for at least a part of the money for the journal—which will come out in two weeks at the latest, and will please you, I think.

I met Höfl and Zimmer together—I didn't have time to see more people, nor to see them again.

This is the situation in Munich:

The Germans are very divided. Höfl, who seems to be closest to us, reproaches the "Spurists" for all of their strictly pictorial and plastic activity, but principally attacks Prem whom he considers to be a simple careerist artist. (I advised Höfl to work more directly with us. He asked me about the various tendencies within the SI. I said that Gallizio, in my opinion, represented our "right wing" with more virtuosity than Spur.)

Zimmer is closest to Höfl, and probably to us as well. But his critiques of Prem are much more friendly in form, and fundamentally moderate: he reproaches Prem for his uniquely *pictorial* preoccupations—while he, Zimmer, wants a unitary art (which is to say, for the moment, a painting that can be integrated into the rest). He is still, I think, at the "pre-Alba" stage of the Imaginist Bauhaus, but might go further.

The two are in agreement on admitting the theoretical and practical incapability of the Spur group to edit a journal in German. I easily got them to make note of it. So, this problem has fortunately been put off.

Eisch is staying in Italy with Gallizio. With the probable exception of Eisch, the Spur folks seem to look

upon Gallizio with irony and pity: they are now persuaded that the tract *Difendiamo la libertà* was something stupid that Pinot got them to make, because everyone is telling them that the *Cuixard incident was made up*. In fact, I regret, as does Höfl, the involvement of situationists in a list of painting prizewinners. But what's done is done. If the "political" pretext is now revealed as false, it's distressing. But on this Jorn is inclined to think that the story is true (albeit inadvertently exaggerated by Pinot); and one can truly see the *interest* the art critics and dealers would have in being silent about it.

I saw a Sturm-Zimmer-Prem show: I found it rather pitiful, even for Munich. Fischer was also there; he's making objects in the style of Roël d'Haese. On this topic, they have published a very long text that I am sending you with this letter. Its translation would interest me (can you do it?). Jorn is not pleased with the text, but I cannot wait the inordinate length of time he would take to translate it. Perhaps the arrival of the brave "Spurists" on theoretical terrain—six months after our collective conference—is an occasion to put them in their place?

Van de Loo was extremely sympathetic. I saw him very quickly because I had to go to another meeting right after. He told me about your show in Essen (in fact, when was that?). On this topic, as he told me that he is counting on showing only "little objects," I think that it would be necessary to add *at least one or two* of the large models (the most important ones, for example the 2 that are reproduced in *IS* n° 3) to underscore our perspectives on urbanism in Germany, where they are *totally unknown*—and even made blurry by Spur. On that note, would it be possible to print my presentation that wasn't used in Holland in your catalogue? I doubt that Van de Loo would object: it is at least twice as short

as the text for the Spur catalogue. It would reestablish our positions a little and it would be more effective there than in a book about urbanism.

Do what's best. See you soon. Regards,

Guy

P.S. Very interesting confirmation of the covered city! I knew about these "potlatch" Indians.¹ This premercantile form of property exchange gave rise to a form of a depreciation of goods with the aim of prestige. And as the dissolution of modern art shows: one can naturally depreciate only what one absolutely possesses.

1. "Potlatch" is a word borrowed from the Chinook, corresponding to the verb "to give." The Indians who practice potlatch are from British Columbia, Canada.

To Constant

Monday [14 December]

Dear Constant,

The journal, after two solid months of delay caused by editing, has had another two weeks of delay caused by finances. But it isn't too much. I think that it will come out at the end of this week, or the beginning of the following, because all the problems have been settled, and we are now with an excellent printer.¹

I believe that you are still coming to Paris before Christmas—looking for Martha and Olga? Write me what day you will be here.

Regards,

Guy

1. Eugène Bogaert, at the Ch. Bernard printers, rue des Cloys, will print all the other issues of *IS*.

To Wyckaert

Monday 14 December

Dear Maurice,

Coulommier called me from Paris, to say that you would come here sometime last week. But I didn't see you ... I hope that Rob is well?

If you come now, you should know that Constant will probably be here at the end of the week—I say this in terms of staying with me. Come before.

If you don't come, let me know and I will write at greater length.

The journal—after a certain delay—will come out toward the end of this week or the beginning of the following.

All the best,

Guy

To Constant

15 December

Dear Constant,

It's very good that you are writing a text for Van de Loo. I think that it should be somewhat theoretical because Germany is precisely the place where, after Jorn, Gallizio, and the Spur group, there is a tendency to present us as brilliant individualists—more or less associated by

chance (and those who take us for individualists don't do us much credit, because it is certain that's what we were, if we weren't absorbed in a common movement, it would be clumsy for the most successful among us as individuals to keep company with certain others who come off as perfect zeroes: see Prem!).

Of course, you can use as much as you want of my unpublished article¹—I consider everything that we write as communal material—but precisely with no “an excerpt from” indication.

Because first of all it would be ridiculous to cite an unpublished text. Furthermore, this text was borderline art criticism: I thus distanced myself from such activity on the first page; furthermore, it would have corresponded to a precise show with your models. Outside of these strictly calculated circumstances, this text *per se* would fall in the category of art criticism; and you know that I want absolutely no part of that.

See you soon, then. Regards,

Guy

1. “Constant and the Path of Unitary Urbanism.”

To Constant

Paris, 23 December 1959

Dear Friend,

Given the collective decisions of the Munich conference, the event at the Stedelijk Museum and through the city of Amsterdam set for the end of May 1960; and the time already passed since then, as well as the

fact that this date draws ever nearer, we ask you, as well as each of the members of the “Bureau of Research for a Unitary Urbanism”:

1) If the “Bureau of Research for a Unitary Urbanism” is still in agreement about putting on this event?

2) How many of you, and whom, can we possibly count on?

3) If you anticipate a group project, or if you are ready to formulate one for the time being? (The first task being to establish a plan in proportion to the room that the Stedelijk Museum will make available to us).

4) To what extent, and on what basis, do you want to reunite the ideas and the propositions of the various sections of the SI so as to bring the project together in its details? (Which is to say what basis has already been established, what margin for decision remains to be taken.)

We insist on the urgency of a discussion among us, and of a response on all these points.

Sincerely,

On *IS* journal letterhead.

G.-E. Debord, M. Wyckaert

To Jorn

Thursday Morning [31 December]

[Dear]¹ Asger

[I know] your difficulties perfectly. From this point of view, [I think] that this visit to the cultural attaché presents too much of a burden given its doubtful utility, and you could give it up.

The top left corner of the letter was torn.

Besides, the Danish embassy just called me to clarify the projection time (which had been omitted in my letter). So the attaché will surely come—you need only be at Filmax.²

For the money for the journal, it's the practical translation of the problem that I told you about this morning: quick jobs require quick payment, and with larger printers like this everything is more curtly administrative.

I repeat my suggestion of putting the large canvas of yours that I have up for sale. That way I would pay for it without you having to paint something else.

Otherwise I'm at a loss as to how I can "settle" the business with the printer myself. It would be too bad not to follow up now, so I hope that we'll manage to.

Regards,

Guy

2. For the first screening of *On the Passage of a Few People through a Rather Brief Moment in Time*.

1960

1960

January

9 January–9 February—On the occasion of an exhibition of Constant's constructions and models, the Van de Loo Gallery in Essen publishes the German translation of a text by Guy Debord on Constant and Unitary Urbanism with cuts that radically alter the text's meaning; Debord makes it known that he is withdrawing his signature.

—Retrospective exhibition for the Experimental Laboratory in Alba at the Notizie Gallery in Turin.

March

16—*Stravrim, sonetter*, a book by Jørgen Nash with illustrations by Asger Jorn, published in Copenhagen.

—Expulsions of A. Alberts and Har Oudejans (architects who accepted an offer to build a church in Volendam), then of Armando, from the Dutch section.

May

6-31—Exhibition of thirty-one paintings by Jorn, Rive Gauche Gallery, Paris.

17—"Manifesto" of the Situationist International (*IS* n° 4).

—*Critique of Political Economy*, followed by *The Final Struggle*, by Asger Jorn, Brussels. "This publication is the second in the series of 'Reports presented to the Situationist International.'" The back cover, which reads "Not

everyone can read *Internationale Situationniste*, the central bulletin published by the sections of the Situationist International”—accompanied by a photograph of parachutists, results in the seizure of the pamphlet at the Belgian border.

—Resignation of Heinz Höfl from the German section.

—*Cahier pour un paysage à inventer* n° 1, Montreal. Editor: Patrick Straram. Texts by Gilles Leclerc, Gaston Miron, Marie-France O’Leary, Paul-Marie Lapointe, Gilles Hénault, Serge Garant, Marcel Dubé, Asger Jorn, Gilles Ivain, Guy-Ernest Debord, Louis Portugais, and Patrick Straram.

31—Exclusions of Giuseppe Pinot Gallizio, Giors Melanotte, and Glauco Wuerich from the Italian section.

June

1st—Resignation of Constant from the Dutch section.

10—Christian Christensen, to whom Jorn had dedicated his *Critique of Political Economy*, dies in Denmark.

10—*Internationale Situationniste* n° 4. Central bulletin published by the sections of the Situationist International. Editor: G.-E. Debord. Editorial Board: Constant, Asger Jorn, Helmut Sturm, Maurice Wyckaert.

July

20—*Preliminaries Toward a Définition of a Unified Revolutionary Program* by P. Canjuers (pseudonym of Daniel Blanchard of the Socialisme ou Barbarie group) and G.-E. Debord.

20—*Pinot Gallizio*, texts by Bernstein (“In Praise of Pinot Gallizio”) and Jorn (“The state of the Passions in the Middle of the Twentieth Century and Gallizio the Tattooed”), second monograph in the Bibliothèque d’Alexandrie, Paris: “This monograph on Pinot Gallizio is published on the occasion of his expulsion from the Situationist International.”

26—Erwin Eisch is dismissed from the German section of the SI.

—Announcement of the creation of a situationist library at the Silkeborg Museum.

August

—*Spur* n° 1, journal of the German section of the SI, Munich. Editorial: Helmut Sturm, Heimrad Prem, Hans-Peter Zimmer, Lothar Fischer.

30—*All the King’s Horses*, novel by Michèle Bernstein, Paris.

September

—Filming begins on *Critique of Separation* by Guy Debord.

8—*Erklärung der deutschen Sektion des IS über den Wahnsinn* (Declaration of the German Section of the SI on Madness) signed by Sturm, Prem, Fischer, Zimmer, Jorn, and Debord, Munich.

25—The Fourth Conference of the SI begins in London.

To Jorn

Monday 4 January 60

Dear Asger,

The film screening was a success. We found a distributor¹ for our journal and books who will handle *the exclusive rights for France*.

So I'll need:

1) The 100 copies of *Mémoires* that are with Augustinci (but it would be better to leave him the case, which is 3 times heavier than its contents) and we need to cancel our project with *La Hune*.²

2) Your advice before adding *For Form* (keeping in mind the fact that I only have *190 copies remaining*).

There is also the question of the "Bibliothèque d'Alexandrie." I have an answer from Constant (prices, etc.).

Come see me as soon as possible when you get back.

Regards,

1. Le Terrain vague.

2. A bookstore on the Boulevard Saint-Germain.

Guy

To Jorn

Friday 8 January

Dear Asger,

I have to leave Paris today for a while and unfortunately I cannot stay to see you to discuss the Dutch and other problems.

According to the letters that I have received, the Dutch are determined to do the event,¹ but their project still seems very vague and inadequate to me (the labyrinth should be conceived according to an *overall idea* of which they haven't even an inkling, and not as a summary arrangement of a single space that we would be called on to furnish. The Dutch should first provide us with the blueprint for the rooms, and have the decency to open a discussion among us on this overall idea.)

I have done my best to arrange a minimum distribution for the 3rd issue of the journal. And, as I wrote you in a recent card, we now have a commercial distributor, who will certainly be very useful publicity-wise, and perhaps, in time to come, even financially. I am leaving you the corrected text of *Critique of Political Economy*, and the manuscript.²

I wrote to Herman,³ from Liège, that the film will be available for him in Brussels at Wyckaert's (10, place de la Justice), after January 15th. The people in Liège want to show it first in their film club. I haven't had an answer from Herman: should we perhaps think about replacing him? I insist on the fact that not just a relatively substantial financial return, but even its artistic impact depends on a *minimum* of effort in making the most of this film, *and doing so without further delay*. The state of our debts is as follows:

—120,000 F to the printer, which would be good, from every point of view, to pay as quickly as possible.

—140,000 F, still owed to the G.T.C. Laboratory, for the final work on the film, making the 2 copies that we have. This can certainly wait until February.

Furthermore, we have to allow for about 10,000 F in taxes to pass the film by the censor commission, and a

1. Project for the transformation of rooms 36 and 37 of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam into a labyrinth (cf. *IS* n° 4, p. 5).

2. It will be printed in May 1960 in Brussels. Included in: Asger Jorn, *The Natural Order and Other Texts*, translated by Peter Shield (Ashgate Publishing, Aldershot, 2002).

3. Herman Wolsgaard-Iversen.

similar amount perhaps for a small information campaign about its being banned.

Michèle will explain the details about the distribution of the books and journals to you. Furthermore, an understanding must be reached on the program of tasks in Holland—or its abandonment. You can reach Michèle, after Tuesday evening, at the impasse de Clairvaux.⁴

Sincerely,

Guy

To Wyckaert

8 January 60

Dear Maurice,

A positive response from Constant and Oudejans in Amsterdam (Alberts being out of the loop since he's in America).

No mention of Armando.

So agreement in principle has been maintained, as we hoped. But there will probably be a lot of work to do, starting I don't know when. The Dutch plan is so vague that it is more the absence of a plan. I think that we should first establish among us the guiding idea behind the construction, the moment we have the blueprint of the available rooms (and also, true to say, a new practical and financial discussion with Sandberg).

Asger is in Amsterdam at the moment, and I think that he will bring back the first clear instructions. But first I wanted to confirm our mutual intent.

4. Guy Debord and Michèle Bernstein live at 1, impasse de Clairvaux.

I have now sent you 4 packages of 5 journals. Ask me for as many more as you can use, for the bookstore or to distribute to friends.

Please let me know the moment you have received the copy of my film: it should be January 15th.

We've now found a commercial distributor with exclusive rights for France for all of our publications. It is useful for publicizing the journal, starting with the current issue n° 3, and also for the books and the "Bibliothèque d'Alexandrie."

See you soon. Regards,

Guy

P.S. Keep us up to date about the delivery of your negatives, etc.

To Gallizio

14 January 60

Dear Pinot,

Agreed as to your idea for a tract.¹ Excellent! But on this absolutely necessary condition:

Our friends from Munich should publish—in German—and sign the tract, *as the German section of the SI*.

In this way, at the same time, they will have the chance to mark a serious point in the campaign of scandal that they say they want to spread everywhere—and we will have publicly indicated that the SI is in no way involved in *everything suspect in Germany today*.

1. Against the new wave of anti-Semitism in Germany (cf. below, letter to Höfl from 13 February 1960).

I propose that you act with them immediately and to see to it that they carry this out as a matter of urgency.

Regards,

Guy

To Wyckaert

Monday [18 January]

Dear Maurice,

I just got back to Paris. I haven't seen Asger yet, but given what he said to Michèle two days ago things should work out in Holland (where the Dutch and Asger himself have already settled on a project). Only we are going to be obliged to submit it to Sandberg without further delay, if we want to have credit for the month of May. I will send you the details after I've seen Asger (probably tomorrow).

For the journals, this is what Michèle must have told Rob: our review copies in Belgium are completely insignificant (perhaps 10 copies including some that I left in Liège). So you can do as you like for distributing copies, whether as gifts or to bookstores. There's not much risk of your coming upon two people who would have already received it. A new package of 20 copies was sent to you last Tuesday—or more precisely: 2 packages of 10.

Ask us to have as many others sent as you think necessary. In Paris, after issue n° 3, several people have written to make contact with us. I will meet them as soon as possible.

And because they have read about our plan to hold the IVth conference in England, some English people are already asking for the date; and for us to speak at the I.C.A!¹ It's very good because we have a plan to use Alloway's minor talents as soon as possible. Constant put on his exhibition in Essen, with a lecture on Unitary Urbanism. At the same time in Turin there was a much more dubious kind of retrospective and historical exhibition of the Alba Laboratory, much more doubtful, with an annoying tendency to get emotional about the glorious past of the Alba congress. We're desperately missing *Potlatch*.

For the film, it's great to show it when you see a good opportunity to do so, up until the producers come to get it—which may well take a long time because Dansk-Fransk, like all the organizations set up by Asger, seems in complete muddle at the moment: a producer has disappeared!² And Asger has started up a third to oversee the behavior of the second. But as it isn't impossible that one or the other may suddenly pull it together, you shouldn't let go of the copy of the film for *more than two or three days*. Some students at the Beaux Arts in Liège wrote to ask me for a showing. I am going to tell them to write to you. And you could entrust it to them if they agree to return it in that time frame.

Regards,

Guy

1. The Institute of Contemporary Arts in London.

2. Herman Wolsgaard-Iversen.

P.S. Haven't heard about the Soviet's machine. But it is really interesting. Such an instrument would surely have a place in our labyrinth.

To Frankin

26 January

Dear André,

Of course, I didn't hold anything against you for your disappearance in Liège. It's a misunderstanding that carries its own penalty: your absence regretted by all. We will do better the next time. I'm well aware that the arrangement of everyday events is sometimes extremely disconcerting, and I think that it is better to run the risk of oversensitivity to them than never to take them into consideration (hence the defects of the *dérive*). On the other hand, I admit that every suspicion, and even furious outburst, is generally more than justified by the conditions we're faced with. Moreover I will uphold the following practical behavior—which can only be considered a personal tendency at a minimum of idle comfort: but also of common action—to place *a priori* confidence, in all cases, and only until *the first proof to the contrary*, in a certain number of comrades recognized on the basis of objective criteria. (All of this doesn't concern simple relations with the “Korbers,” which are only automatic relations like one has with honest or dishonest café owners.) Distrust should then be exercised through the creation and regular keeping up to date of such a list. But afterwards one at least saves time. On the basis of these specific conditions, communication is still a benefit, or at least a risk one absolutely has to take. I suppose that you think as I do, after all. I think that it should be added that Vaume and Arlette are not only interesting people, but obviously worthy of trust. They show you friendship to the point of unconditional patience.

For the theses,¹ I think that it was good to publish them because they had a sufficient and clear point of application. And as you can see in the issue itself, they have contributed directly to a discussion within the SI, which is all too weak on this subject. I would like it if in the following issues you could come up with lengthier expositions, which cannot yet exceed the length of a long article, but is this a negligible form of communication? I think that the “progressive” notion of the book excludes the pursuit of perfection, of any sort of completion. Formally and practically theoretical thought seeks its expression in a system of fragments, it seems to me.

I am pleased with your comments about *Passage*² because criticism—or praise—has no true interest than when it emerges onto a collaborative perspective. And the idea that you evoke at the end is precisely the cinematographic project that I have had since finishing the work on *Passage*. But this time it will present considerable economic difficulties: it can only be a medium-length feature (45 minutes or less), with fairly substantial material requirements (I will have to do part of the filming from a helicopter, etc.). So we will have time to discuss the matter further.

You have observed the difference in correlation between the commentary and the image, between the first and second parts of *Passage*. These *détourned* phrases are mixed throughout the whole film, but the majority are in the first part. My outline was the following: the film begins as an ordinary documentary, technically average. It slowly becomes unclear, disappointing (which might initially be a show of “ideological” pretension about a clear subject) because the text appears more and more inadequate and bombastically exaggerated in relation to the images (Lefebvre’s tone = Marx-Goldman-Huizinga!).

1. “Platform For a Cultural Revolution” cf. *IS* n° 3, p. 24.

2. *On the Passage of a Few People Through a Rather Brief Moment in Time*.

The question is, then: so what's the subject? Which is, I think, a break in the routine of the spectacle, an irritating and disconcerting break.

With the appearance of the first blank white frame, the film begins to contradict itself in every respect—and in this way becomes *clearer*, its author *siding against it*. At the same time it is, rather explicitly, an art anti-film about this day and age's non-achievement, and an ultimately realistic description of a way of life devoid of coherence and importance. The form corresponds to the content. This is not the description of this or that activity (the merchant marine, drilling for oil, a monument to admire or destroy, like Franju's magnificent *Hôtel des Invalides*) but of the center of that activity, which is empty. It paints "real life" which is absent. It is this rather slow movement of unveiling, of negation that I attempted as a plan for *Passage*. But very quickly, arbitrarily, it must be said. The main weakness is that, unlike the prevailing opinion which is dazzled by economic obstacles, the one-reeler is very unfavorable to a real experimental cinema (too short). It favors on the contrary a perfectly measured expression. On the other hand, the thing that seems interesting to *détourn* is the fixed form of the traditional documentary, which in this sense binds us to 20 intangible minutes.

Up and running now is the fascism that the crisis of May 1958 inevitably put in place, despite the comical and hypocritical surprise of almost all the commentators—and with the abiding absence of the worker's movement. January 24th was a relatively failed uprising.³ But the time passed since then (I am writing this on the 26th around noon) displays de Gaulle's weakness. A popular insurrection that doesn't advance, which is reduced to being defensive, is a losing one, we know. But

3. A "week of barricades" in Algiers from the January 24th to 30th, 1960.

this is only true because, normally, it is immediately countered by repressive forces. Here, the entire insurrection is just an increasingly demanding and indiscreet call for the army's support. And each hour that passes reinforces the challenge, dilutes the appearance of Gaullist régime, which is solely *its threat of being obeyed by the army, if it was in command*. But the army, if it has not formally risen up, has already made known *its threat to disobey, if commanded* (it is obvious that at this stage, the régime's only possible *command* is to crush its declared enemies, isolated after taking up arms, as in Budapest). In fact the paratrooper colonels declared that night to Debré that the order to march against the rebels would provoke a "crisis of conscience" among the officers. This is surely true, but why is it important? In fact, when the army is *speaking* prior to a crisis of conscience, this clearly indicates the threat to conscientiously evaluate an order, which is the opposite of obeying it. Despite the 25 dead of the day before yesterday, the present reality is still more dismally comical than the "civil war" of May 58. This "Fort Chabrol" on an urban level, and the greatness of the bistro owner suddenly equal in the eyes of the world to the celebrated greatness of the General: where is this taking a "certain idea of France"? To the sewers of history. All this Greatness is united in worn-out myths: de Gaulle is quite happy to love France, and happy that Ortiz is French, since it is his last excuse to let the rabble that made him king contend for precedence with him in the street, and give him his week's notice.

Evidently the interests of big investors, who have reigned so freely since May 13th, are not those of Ortiz. But in a period of violent crisis, does capitalist order maintain its chemical purity through the authority of Mr. Baumgartner or through the irrational compromises with

plain-clothes and uniformed shopkeepers? What disturbs me is that the Algiers rabble haven't read *Arguments* or *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. If they had, they would have learned that their interests, condemned by the development of technocratic capitalism as well as the absence of the economic base of the army, doom them to never be anything more than a vain appearance of force, a phantom floating in front of actual French society, which lives not so much on the other side of the water than in another era. But they know nothing of it: what aren't they capable of?

Regards,

Guy

To Constant

Tuesday [26 January]

Dear Constant,

I indeed received the 20 copies of your book,¹ presently the only one in the "Bibliothèque d'Alexandrie"! And 20 other copies are for sale (so it will be in the "Terrain Vague" catalog).

A very good idea, the text on the conditions for the *dérive* in the covered city (naturally this is the most "technical" possible, theoretical—and far from the literary "imagination" of science-fiction). Agreed too about the illustrations, which could be completed with one or more very complicated outlines—giving an account of *three-dimensional* possibilities (cf. the outline by Khatib in *IS 2*, on Les Halles, given a spatial development).

1. The monograph on Constant.

Two practical questions regarding *IS 4* (rather urgent):

1) Ask your usual printer for an *estimate for a issue equal to IS 3*, written in French, with a run of either 2,000 or 3,000 copies (excluding the price for the negatives).

Because the question will be raised: should we print the next issue in France or in Amsterdam? The matter of the price could play a decisive role in this debate.

2) (This could be related or unrelated to the first deal.) What kind of *metallic cover* can we obtain in Holland? That is, continuing with the range of our covers, what can we find?

In France—the country is poor in this regard—we have just about exhausted everything with gold and silver.

Keeping in mind the fact that it must have a *thickness* equal to n° 3, what *colors* can one find? (We would like *copper red* if possible.)

If you find something, send me some samples and the costs (for a quantity equivalent to 2[000] or 3,000 copies, including losses in cutting).

Yes, it is certain that we are progressing. At the same time as your letter, I received a letter from Frankin who has now been contacted by young students of architecture in Liège, who have seen my film² (in which I questioned architecture and urbanism as much as possible) and who want to be informed more precisely about U.U. Everything that might clarify the subject should be sent to: P. Wansart, 64, avenue de l'Observatoire, Liège.

Frankin, who has been very isolated up till now, seems encouraged by the current excitement.

I think that the moment has truly come to carry out—and pull off—the Amsterdam operation. We now have the means to exploit it.

Regards to all,

Guy

2. *On the Passage of a Few People Through a Rather Brief Moment in Time.*

To Jorn

Tuesday [2 February]

Dear Asger,

Yesterday I found the token of your recent visit. Thanks.

I myself just got back from Brussels where I met Constant and Wyckaert. So we saw, and worked together on, the Dutch project which was already, at this stage, very satisfying: I have a plan established by the architects for the development of 2 rooms into a labyrinth. We worked a lot. And now it's up to Sandberg.

Can you stop by my place tomorrow evening,
Wednesday at 9?

Sincerely,

Guy

To Constant

Tuesday morning [9 February]

Dear Constant,

First off, the drawings.

I am waiting for the outline. Or rather would it be possible for you to send me two of them?—so that I can get one to Jorn.

In any case, a second drawing is required, and a new printing, with the modifications adopted in Brussels.

Regards,

Guy

To Constant

Friday 12 February 60

Dear Constant,

The dates May 30th to June 20th can work very well.¹ I hope that Sandberg will be able to make a quick decision March 1st, for the money (Asger thinks too that the *sum is rather small*, even though Sandberg may well be a little pressed for time if he has to ask for external aid from a Foundation).

For the *doors*, I don't agree about the change you mentioned. For the following reasons, that must absolutely not be neglected:

1) We don't want to offer the ambiance of a city throughout and completely. This is absolutely beyond our means, and would reveal exactly how pathetic our means are—it would be a mere decorative flourish. We need to *blend together* zones of ambiance evoking a city, and zones of ambiance evoking the *interior of a house* (which is our real terrain at the Stedelijk Museum: a kind of *apartment that we are going to arrange*, and do so by making the urban elements from the exterior appear therein).

I consider this *blend of interior and exterior* as the most advanced point of our experimental construction. (Furthermore, it is the only viewpoint financially possible, for creating a *truly never-before-seen mixed milieu* there, and not a poor representation of urbanism. We will create real urbanism the *next time*.)

2) The doors, as we decided in Brussels, are completely necessary for creating the possibility of getting lost, of retracing one's steps, of choosing a different path. This is the indispensable character of every labyrinth, as in our conception of the *dérive* ...

1. For the show in Amsterdam around the creation and interior arrangement of a labyrinth.

3) This said, I am in complete agreement about envisioning various turnstiles, fence-objects, etc.—and even many other things—for *further complicating* certain spaces of the labyrinth. But this without reconsidering to the structure of the doors—and even to the nature of the doors chosen in Brussels (one-way doors, hidden doors).

So I insist in any case on absolute conformity with the means of acces planned in Brussels. Asger feels the same way.

Very good for your partial model of the covered city! Naturally, this is a very important element for our reading room.

Final point: Asger is thinking, if the show begins on May 30th, of being able to arrange the publication of the fourth issue of the journal on that date (*beyond Sandberg's budget of 15,000 florins*; and letting him distribute the 1,000 or 1,500 copies that we will give him for free). You can let Sandberg know about that.

This perspective raises the issue of the somewhat speedier drawing up of issue 4. What article will you give me? (The translation of your text from Essen?)

Finally, can you convince Oudejans and Alberts to write an interesting article, for example on the distinctive features of Amsterdam? Or on the topological notions that Alberts spoke to me about in Paris? We must obtain the maximum labor, to go back to this editorial question, from all the situationists capable of working immediately in this direction.

See you soon. Regards,

Guy

P.S. The 3rd issue continues to elicit letters from would-be members. The latest, from Israel—a country where we had distributed at most three copies!

To Ovadia¹

Paris, 13 February 60

Dear Comrade,

Thank you for your letter. I am sending you some copies of n° 3, which recently appeared.

We will gladly accept your help. Under what form, I leave you to judge, keeping in mind that the limits of our bulletin oblige us to confine ourselves to rather general theoretical articles—or to propositions that attempt to concretely illustrate these problems.

The next issue should, in principle, come out around May 30th.

If you should know an “avant-garde” bookstore in Tel Aviv, could you ask them on our behalf to stock a few copies, and to be our exclusive distributor for the country? We have no distribution in Israel.

Sincerely,

G.-E. Debord

1. Jacques Ovadia, Israeli journalist with the French-language *L'Écho d'Israël*; situationist belonging to no section.

To Guy Atkins¹

13 February 60

Dear Mr. Atkins,

We think that the next SI conference will meet in London around the month of September. The exact date has not yet been finalized. We will write to let you know as soon

1. Guy Atkins, linguist specializing in African languages. He met Jorn in London in 1956. Member of the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London (ICA). Jorn's bibliographer.

as it is possible, and gladly send one of our comrades to speak to the ICA.

I sent Mr. Alloway the requested copy.

Asger Jorn would be very pleased if you could do the following service for him: it is a question of meeting Mr. Herman Wolsgaard-Iversen (34a Brunswick Gardens, Kensington) to remind him that a copy of the short-feature film, *On the Passage of a Few People Through a Rather Brief Moment in Time* is available for him in Brussels (with Mr. Maurice Wyckaert, 10 place de la Justice); and that Jorn is absolutely counting on him to undertake its immediate distribution in England.

Thanking you in advance, best wishes,

G.-E. Debord

To Höfl

13 February 60

Dear Heinz,

The next issue of the journal will appear, in principle, at the end of the month of May, for the opening of our show in Amsterdam. So if you want to publish an article this time, I must get it before April 15th. You can send the text in German, we will do the translation.

In Amsterdam, we have organized the construction and interior arrangement of a labyrinth; and at the same time we are doing interventions in the city streets. There will also be a campaign of tracts and lectures. Are you

thinking of participating in this event? Does Zimmer, for example, plan on coming?

I would also like to take this opportunity to ask you to go to see the Perhn bookstore for us, in the Theaterstrasse, to ask him to stock a certain number of copies of the journal, and to be our exclusive bookstore for Munich. Write me if this bookstore agrees, and how many copies should be sent. Or if not, the address of a more favorable bookstore. Gallizio wrote me that he asked the friends from "Spur" to quickly publish a tract against the new wave of anti-Semitism. But it seems that they don't want to do it?

Warm regards,

G.-E. Debord

To Frankin,

14 February 60

Dear André,

Just a brief word, in the middle of a rather full day.

We will probably publish the fourth issue of the journal at the end of May, so as to coincide with the SI show scheduled in Amsterdam on that date.

So—the eternal question—if you have the happy intention of giving us more copy this time, I would need to receive it around April 15th.

Don't you want to write something on moments, starting for example with Lefebvre's theory, that you

spoke to me about? I am reading *La Somme et Le Reste* right now. It is very interesting; and close to us—here I mean: the theory of moments.

Also Lefebvre wrote to us,¹ after reading issue n° 3. I haven't seen him yet because he is traveling this month, and before he left I was myself away from Paris. But we should meet here shortly.

I hope that we will soon see you too in this beautiful capital of the Gaullist atomic Empire.

Regards,

Guy

1. 3 January 1960, Henri Lefebvre wrote: "I've been wanting to meet you since the beginning of your journal. Your third issue prompts me. Not so much because of what you write about me, as because of your views on urbanism, on (and against) functionalism, on radical critique and the possibilities of the creative attitude, etc."

To Gallizio

14 February 60

Dear Pinot,

I am just back from a meeting in Brussels with Wyckaert and the Dutch, studying the plan for our Amsterdam labyrinth, which has now been adopted. The Dutch have done a good job. Asger is also pleased.

The industrial painting should be something like the apotheosis: it will entirely cover a *tunnel*, extremely wide at the start, then becoming increasingly narrow, which everyone will be obliged to cross through—with difficulty—at its exit.

It will be the *coup de grâce*.

Ideally the show should run from *May 30th to June 20th*. But it needs two months of work before opening. Can you tell me exactly how many meters of industrial

painting are available for this construction (indicating the width of the rolls)?

Regards,

Guy

P.S. Naturally, we all disapprove of Guasco's¹ text; this is praise that these people should have offered the week after the Alba Congress. They were silent then, you certainly remember. And now their praise, which doesn't take into consideration anything that has happened since then because they oppose it, has a clearly and profoundly retrograde meaning. This explains the tendency to make even Simondo reappear, like the audacity of falsifying a photo from our Munich conference.

One couldn't have expected better from that priest Pistoï.

1. Lorenzo Guasco, Italian art critic, author of a study on the experimental activities of the SI in Italy, published in January 1960 on the occasion of a retrospective show devoted to the Alba Experimental Laboratory at the Notizie Gallery in Turin.

To Wyckaert

Sunday 14 February

Dear Maurice,

I was waiting for news from Amsterdam before writing you. I finally received it and now I have several different things to tell you.

1) Sandberg is in the USA until March 1st. So he can't discuss our budget until that date. Last week, his assistant, Dr. Jaffé, asked that we send him the plan, and announced that our show was now set for *May 30th to June 20th*.

Asger also thinks that 15,000 florins is not a large sum to ask for this. He's just afraid of Sandberg getting caught completely unprepared if he needs to ask for aid from an outside Foundation (he would in fact only have the month of March to decide everything). Asger is particularly sorry that the work we finally obtained in January wasn't carried out in like manner in October.

2) Constant wrote me that a meeting among the Dutch resulted in the idea of eliminating the overabundance of doors that would "detract from the urban ambience"! He asked if I agreed with this elimination.

I responded immediately that I was determined to keep all the doors the way that we set them together in Brussels: first because it would be stupid to seek to reproduce, in a foolishly realistic manner, a reduced (so reduced) model of a real city. The interest of the construction as envisioned is first in the creation of a mixed milieu, never before seen; a blend of interior-exterior characteristics (at once evoking urban areas and the arrangement of an apartment—for example the principle of the hidden door, etc.). I added that these doors were necessary for the very functioning of the labyrinth (to offer the effective possibility of choosing different routes and of getting lost).

Asger also thinks that these doors are indispensable. I suggest you write Constant immediately to give him your opinion about it. This is a rather annoying example of the nonchalance of the Dutch, since we had agreed that the need to adopt a definitive plan before February 1st would inevitably render the decisions that we made together that day definitive. Furthermore, we approved the entire structure of the labyrinth, save the absence of the doors. And this is our only correction of the Dutch group's work. This is a curious conception of collective

labor as well as of discipline, to propose, as soon as they return to Holland, to coolly eliminate the only modification that the SI requested in approving their project.

3) If the show works on May 30th, Asger wants to publish the fourth issue of the journal at the same time. Sandberg will distribute a large portion of the run. Asger is trying hard to arrange the finances beyond Sandberg's budget (which would therefore make up a share of the additional financial aid that we would bring Sandberg's show).

From this perspective, we are going to have various problems to resolve rather quickly. I will ask you in particular to search immediately for the samples of metallic covers that you spoke to me about (if possible the copper red color). To send me, with the samples, the prices as well as the means and delivery times of transport available either to Paris or to Amsterdam (the quantity is at most: 2 reams).

4) I think that we must foresee, for your monograph, photos for your palisade elements. And if the negatives are done in a group in Copenhagen beforehand, we can add some taken in Amsterdam (the completed palisade, and the production of the orchestral painting). This can serve to tie the painting very visually to the search for integration in a constructed milieu.

Send me news as soon as possible. Regards,

Guy

To Frankin

22 February 60

For A.F. on the *La Somme et le Reste*.¹

The situation as moment—created, organized
and H. L.² approaches *this desire*
including instants that are perishable,
ephemeral
unique—

it is an organization of the whole, ordering/favoring
such contingent instants.

The constructed situation is therefore from the
perspective of the Lefebvrian moment (opposed to the
instant) but at a *level* (of organization) *intermediary*
between an instant and “moment.” Thus, although
repeatable up to a certain point (as direction, “meaning”)—
it is not in itself repeatable like the Lefebvrian moment.

Personal ex.: the moment J contained and surpassed
this or that instant. And lasts + or –.

1. Notes sent to Frankin about
La Somme et le Reste, which will
help in writing the article
“Théorie des moments et con-
struction des situations” *IS* n°
4, p. 10.

2. Henri Lefebvre

22 February 60

Also for A.F. on *La Somme et le Reste*

The difficulty for Lefebvre is in setting up a *list* of his
moments (why 10 rather than 15 or 25, etc.).

The difficulty of the “situationist” moment is on
the contrary in marking its exact end (its *reversal*? into
another), its transformation into a different term of

this series of situations that (can?) constitute such a Lefebvorean moment.

Because the “m[oment]” —> pure body

The more undiff. sit. is almost an infinity of combinations. Hence diff. in characterizing *one* situation and its borders (what will characterize it is its praxis, its deliberate formation).

Thus, H.L. says “the love moment.”

From the point of view of the creation of moments, from the situationist point of view, one must envision *the love moment of this or that person*, which means, *of these or those people in these or those circumstances*. This can be partially constructed—not purely.

The limit of the “constructed” moment is the *series of situations* linked to a same theme. (The love of *this or that person*.) It is very particular and unrepeatable in relation to the Lefebvorean “moment.” But very extended and (relatively) durable in relation to the unique-ephemeral instant.

Moreover, the moment is initially temporal (zone of temporality). The impure yet dominant sit. (strictly articulated in a place) is completely spatio-temporal. (Cf. A. Jorn on the space-time of life.)

At a more extended (more objective) spatial level, Gilles Ivain’s city district-states of the mind, in urbanistic terms, correspond rather precisely to Lefebvorean moments deliberately chosen and abandoned at will from (de-alienation in Gilles Ivain’s Sinister quarter).³ Finally, to summarize the problem of *encounter* in the theory of moments and in the theory operative in the construction of situations, the following question must be posed:

what mixture

what interactions

3. Cf. Gilles Ivain, “Formulary For a New Urbanism,” *IS* n° 1, pp.15–20.

will come up between the unfolding (and resurgence) of the “natural” moment in H.L.’s sense and certain of its artificially *constructed* elements, introduced into its unfolding and disrupting it, quantitatively *and* (especially) *qualitatively*.

H.L. is right in this: the moment tends toward the absolute, and is undone in it. It is, *at the same time*, proclamation of the absolute and consciousness of transitoriness.

And in this: it is in fact the path to *STRUCTURAL-CONJUNCTURAL* dialectical unity.

The *sit.* is this: an attempt at structure of (in) the conjunction.

And *this* is its program (end of page 654 beginning of 655):

“This intervention would result, at the level of everyday life, in a better distribution of its elements and of its instants in the “moments” so as to intensify the vital output of the everyday, its capacity for communication, for information, and also above all, of enjoyment, by defining new ways of enjoying natural and social life. The theory of moments does not belong outside the everyday but links up with it by combining with critique to introduce into it what its richness lacks. It thus aims at transcending—in the heart of the everyday, in a new form of distinctive enjoyment, united to the totality—the old oppositions of lightness and heaviness, seriousness and the light-heartedness.”⁴

4. Henri Lefebvre, *La Somme et le Reste*, vol. 2 (Paris: La Nef de Paris Editions).

To Sandberg

Amsterdam, 7 March 1960

Dear Sir,

We wish to thank you for the interest that you have shown in us, and for your offer to open the Stedelijk Museum to an experiment by the SI.

Unfortunately, it is impossible for us to consider any kind of restriction on the projected show. We know of the obstacles that you are encountering right now. But our role, as you certainly understand, is to safeguard the totality of our approach; not to substitute us for specialists in economic and social developments.

Consequently, we are informing you that you can assign rooms 36 and 37 to a different purpose as of May 30th. The situationists will not be in a position to make use of them on that date, or later.

Our regards to you.

Letterhead of the Dutch Section of the SI, Polaklaan 25.

Constant, Debord, Jorn

To Constant

Friday [11 March]

Dear Constant,

I brought the book of music to rue du Tâge. I hope to hear from Asger soon—he already informed Paris by indignant postcard of our two architects' betrayal; so there's absolutely no going back on this matter.¹

Maurice wasn't too discouraged by the sad news. He said: "We'll do it elsewhere." He thinks that Van de Loo will be controlling a museum in Essen itself.

I learned that one of my friends is staying in Amsterdam for about ten days. His name is Ghislain de Marbaix.² I'm sending him your address, and I hope that you will give him some information about places to see in Amsterdam, or show him some interesting things.

He's not a situationist. He is even hostile to modern art as a whole. But he's been a friend since Saint-Germain-des-Prés days, and he's done big favors for me. He loves beer. Thanks in advance for this.

Frankin is working more and more on incredible theoretical developments. I received a very sympathetic but very muddled article from our supporter in Israel. Now we need to transform the setback suffered in Amsterdam into a new advance for the SI (through publications, and in particular by explaining what we wanted to do in Amsterdam and how we were prevented from doing so.)

See you soon. Regards,

Guy

1. Alberts and Oudejans has agreed to build a church in Volendam, Holland (cf. *IS* n° 4, p. 13).

2. One of the participants in the scandal at Notre Dame on Easter 1950.

To Wyckaert

Monday [14 March]

Dear Maurice,

The more I think about it, the setback in Amsterdam is most unfortunate—but on the other hand our refusal was entirely justified. What is disheartening is having to be forced into a position where we ourselves had to refuse (therefore to lose) *without struggling*, at any moment, and even at a minimum, to impose ourselves there where we had made such advances. Just think, on the one hand, about the lengths Appel and Alechinsky had to go to in terms of diplomacy and platitudes for their own failed project, but then surely against us; and on the other hand about the fact that Sandberg has not even had a chance to *read the third issue of the journal*, and that we didn't know this detail!

Asger is now reassured. It must be admitted that the nonchalance of our Dutch friends in this affair is the same nonchalance that could drive—or permit—Har and Alberts to build a church without thinking that it was incompatible with SI membership.

It is quite true that all this follows on from a certain tactic of intimidation applied in Munich. There is nothing to be gained from seeking to cut corners with a bluff. Now things must be clarified on all fronts. This is also the best means of forestalling the personal oppositions that are always added to the other problems when the Dutch were involved. Asger and I agree on this point: all of this must be sanctioned by the dissolution of the “Bureau of Unitary Urbanism,” just as we no longer want to accept the “Gruppe Spur” label nor any kind of *dual*

membership. We lack the means (without sinking at once into dishonest confusion and ridicule) to promote more than *one movement*, within which there is proof enough that everyone enjoys quite substantial ideological freedom, and complete artistic freedom. These ridiculous proliferations of “Bureaus” or “laboratories” that represent, in the SI, the limited platform of or two individuals, cannot go on any longer. We need to recognize, in each country, only one Situationist group. That on this basis there should be 6, 14, or 35 of us is of secondary importance. But on the contrary, invasion by elements that are both irresponsible and autonomous does us major harm.

In this way an entire group is already thinking of forming in Israel. But when you think of the weak control that we have had on the Dutch group, the idea of what this might be in the Middle East is cause for panic! The only (minimum) remedy is the perfect clarity of the public positions of the SI, not only in the journal, but in all publications: hence the suppression of the perilous ravings of a Prem or of the new Italian admirers of Alban art.

Regarding the problem of dual membership, please send me an exact translation of the attached tract.

Regarding our publications: your idea chimes with mine, I think, which was to do a special issue of the journal devoted to *détournement*. We could build, in a hall somewhere, your fragments of a palisade and photograph them—for this and also for your monograph?

This evening, with Asger, we will write to Caspari.¹

So I am expecting proofs soon. And also the final estimate for the 2,000 copies of the journal (as well as the cover samples that you could find).

But this entire program of publications should not cause us to remove the labyrinth-*dérive* project from the agenda. Perhaps we will find possibilities in London

1. Arthus C. Caspari, German writer and critic.

during the next conference? A solution (of the “Essen museum” type) that would sacrifice the *dérives* seems too diluted to me and so rather negative.

Regards,

Guy

To Wyckaert

29 March 60

Dear Maurice,

I received your letter (not yet the proofs). Thanks for everything.

The translation is excellent: you did not say what you thought. But I think there isn't much to discuss. It's an inoffensive bit of pure stupidity, and perhaps that's where Armando's “revolutionary” spirit finds its favorite application. If I understand correctly, the Dutch Informal Group is against “abstract painting,” and makes a strong publicity campaign to sell under this label. I received nearly 10 invitations over the last three months to shows by this group in various cities in Holland and Germany. Another point to resolve, clearly.

The cost of the cover has risen terribly (8,000 Belgian francs versus 1,500/2,000 Belgian francs for the cover of n° 3!) almost making the estimate between Brussels and Paris equal.

I would particularly like to see other samples. You sent me one gold and one silver which are excluded in advance, plus one tinted green. What other colors can we

have? And particularly *of the red* (copper), or if need be (pale) blue. So I'm waiting for this.

We wrote to Caspari eight days ago. Asger thinks that he will be very pleased, and that he will write an excellent introduction.¹

I will send back to you as soon as possible the corrected proofs and the mock-up for the cover and first pages.

They tell me that Constant is coming to Paris for a few days around April 15th. He will undoubtedly stop by to see you. You should avoid making him feel too discouraged by useless reproach (as Asger has had a small tendency to), and also show him that we have learned lessons from what one might call the “accelerated recruitment of whole sections of the SI”—of ready-made Research Bureaus. Real research activity advances more slowly, we've learned it the hard way.

Regards to Rob and yourself,

Guy

1. To Wyckaert's monograph.

To Constant

30 March

Dear Constant,

Don't forget that I need to receive your editorial contribution to the next issue by April 15th—and also the documents about the labyrinth.

I received, after many others, a tract from the Dutch Informal Group (*Bekendmaking*, etc.) which strikes me as beyond ridiculous.

I think that Armando, through his boisterous adherence to this pictorial group that has produced neither a work nor even one idea of the slightest originality, has strayed from the SI, more pleasantly but also more clearly than Har and Alberts.

Which proves that the formula “Bureau of Research for Unitary Urbanism” was unfortunately premature. Or rather that we recruit people who, fundamentally, have remained indifferent (which was the case with your Dutch friends); or rather it would come to still worse: individuals like these taking this activity seriously would totally escape our control and would sully the problems that we have shown them (feigning, for example, to apply U.U. to religious architecture).

Finally the SI, despite its faults, remains the only group platform wherein our preoccupations can carry them. Which also supposes the liquidation of the ridiculous “Spur group”—without further delay.

Have you had echoes of our refusal from Sandberg?
Regards,

Guy

To Ovadia

30 March 60

Dear Ovadia,

We sent you the copies that you requested, with the exception of *Fin de Copenhague*, completely out of print, and replaced by a book done more recently on the same technical basis.¹

1. Guy Debord, *Mémoires*.

Your article, like your letter, underscores the necessity of envisioning a totality, outside of which one cannot conceive a program of demands or innovations that would really be at the level of the means of the era. This is as true, scandalously, here as it is in Israel. We live in an unhappy world produced by fragmentary reformisms—which also implies permanent cohabitation with the greatest reactionary dangers.

We will put your article² in the next journal. I cannot guarantee that it won't have a few cuts: our editorial board has a heavy hand (and, as you may imagine, no respect for literary propriety).

We will be pleased to hear from you, as from your comrades, about the conditions that you encounter, and of projects like ours in your country.

Sincerely,

G.-E. Debord

2. "Signal for the Beginning of a Revolutionary Culture in Israel," *IS* n° 4, p. 22.

To Wyckaert

Tuesday [5 April]

Dear Maurice,

I just sent you the proofs.¹ A series of instructions on precise points of the layout is attached. The problems raised by the printing of something as simple as this pamphlet by Asger absolutely forbid printing the journal in Amsterdam, under such risky conditions. As I said to you yesterday over the phone, you should now find a supplier of copper-gold paper (2,500 C B) and find out:

1. For Jorn's *Critique of Political Economy*, op. cit.

The cost of a ream + two quires (corresponding to 2,000 covers)

The delivery time to Paris (+ the customs costs)

— or else you should bring it here yourself, and we would include the cost of trip in the budget for the journal. It's simpler than me spending a month in Brussels for 10 successive corrections.

If the delivery must be made directly to our printer his address is on the journal (n° 3). But tell me so that I can inform him.

Regards,

Guy

— For the “back cover” (where finally the image and text are *all on the right*), the title and the subtitle of the journal must be exactly as I sent them to you. If necessary, making a line block (material attached).

— The pages of our mock-up represent the format of the brochure with the exception of 3 millimeters missing from the *bottom margin* of each page.

— Don't forget that all the titles of the “chapters” of the *Critique of P.E.* need to be redone in lower case as in the *Report*.

— On the “end paper,” the formula: “This publication is the second in the series of Reports presented to the Situationist International,” should be placed and composed exactly like the form of words from the “back” of the *Report*.

— On the basis of errors committed up to now, the printer should keep *as strictly as possible*, as to typography, to the format and layout of the *Report*. So, let him reduce the margins to get his bogus receipt through. (Please protest bitterly over this error which looks like it won't be the last!)

— Obligated to do the mock-up with the first (uncorrected) proofs, I have to cut all the margins, and the corrections in the margins. So he should read all the corrections that are in the lines very carefully.

— I'm writing the *pagination*: in pencil where it should not be printed. In ink where it should in fact be marked.

— Maurice himself should choose the best of the various characters of the subtitles within the book (for example: ORIENTATION, REFERENCE, etc.) taking the main connections within the manuscript into account. If we let the printer choose, he would do everything the same size.

[]²

— For the dedication to Christiansen³ (page 3) choose characters small enough to isolate them on the right of the page (beneath the photo).

2. Space left for the placement of a photo of Christian Christiansen.

3. Under the photo of Christiansen, one reads: "I dedicate this study to Christian Christiansen, who has been at the forefront of the worker's struggle in my country. He endured, for their cause, a long imprisonment. And afterwards, he had to spend his life on the margins of a movement divided up between Stalinist and reformist bureaucracies. In my youth, I learned the libertarian contents of social revolution from him. He cannot be forgotten."

To Wyckaert

Thursday [7 April]

Dear Maurice,

A final word about a point that is preoccupying Asger: the *green* of the cover should be chosen with care. It should be equivalent to the red of the *Report* (or, if necessary, be a little more clear). Because one should above all *verify that, against the green in question, the image (on the back) prints well.*

Asger is counting on your experience: *anche tu, sei pittore*¹...

Write me as soon as possible the date when I will

1. "You too are a painter ..."

receive the first mailing of the *Critique*²—and the other information concerning the cover.

Regards,

Guy

P.S. When *Critique* has been printed, first send 3 or 4 packages of 5 copies to Asger and me. And right after 2 or 3 packages of 100 copies—which may well be held up at customs.

If you return to Paris shortly thereafter, you could also bring 100 with you.

Good luck.

2. *Critique of Political Economy* by Jorn will be seized at the Belgian border because of the image on the back cover showing parachutists with the caption, “Not everyone can read the *Internationale Situationniste*.”

To Zimmer, Prem, Höfl, Sturm, etc.¹

15 April 60

Dear Friends,

We didn't learn that you wrote to Amsterdam until today. Thank you for your offer to participate in the whole construction.

But as of March we refused to do the show with Sandberg: the conditions were too much in a “Museum” style.

We will do it elsewhere soon, together.

Regards,

1. In German: *Für Zimmer, Prem, Höfl, Sturm, u.s.w.*

Debord, Wyckaert

To Oradía

[Fragment] of a letter from 21 April 60

(Promising an anthology of articles from the *Internationale Situationniste* journal in English translation "soon")

... As you say, the real social explosion of culture is yet to be brought about in a practical sense. If crisis in culture, like Dadaism, signified its decomposition in the eyes (in the conscience) of the advanced professionals of that activity, the real ultimate crisis of culture is inseparable from the global social crisis. One of the first points of the revolutionary resolution of such a crisis will be precisely the end of the specialized separation between the "producers of culture" and the rest of living people (therefore also, between a (more or less modernist) "cultural domain" and the rest of life.

To Lefebvre

Paris, 5 May 60

Dear Henri Lefebvre,

Indeed, the writing in question is directed more against the "world of expression" of pseudo-communication; through a kind of politics of the worst. How can this be revolutionary romanticism?¹ Revolutionary romanticism, as you yourself have till now defined as content, as motivation, can be applied to the analysis of every manifestation of modern consciousness (including the fact

1. 30 April 1960, Henri Lefebvre wrote: "I appreciate the irony of the 'revolutionary romanticism' slogan on your card, beside your name. But what exactly did you mean? ... Do you want to end up trashing the 'world of expression,' which wouldn't displease me, but doesn't fall within the sphere of 'revolutionary romanticism' or something masquerading as that?"

of expressing it in a novel in the Stendhalian mode). But it seems to us that in this specific manifestation that is the dissolution of modern art, these self-negating forms are directly motivated by the central contradiction of revolutionary romanticism, are the very forms of its content.

If romanticism can be generally characterized as a refusal of the present, its traditional nonexistence is a movement toward the past; and its “revolutionary” variant an intolerance of the future. These two aspects are struggling in all modern art, but I think that only the second, that which engages in new demands, represents the importance of this artistic period.

Can one not think that one is living today and is thus revolutionary-romantic—if that is the word—even unconsciously; whereas no one has ever managed to be, for example, socialist-realist without a firm decision?

I am thus counting therefore on “situationist” perspectives (which, as you know, are unafraid to go far) at least to give our romanticism revolutionary endorsement; and, at best, to transcend all romanticism.

I will also be in Paris around the middle of May, and very happy to meet you.

Most sincerely,

G.-E. Debord

To Gallizio

Paris, 6 May 60

Dear Pinot,

Everything is underway for Amsterdam,¹ and I hope that you will be pleased with the monograph (there is, among other things, a biographical note that is a first step in the forging of a legendary reputation for you. It is a task that we will continue).

The list of your future exhibitions is impressive. Bravo! This is the strategic moment to exploit the victory: a quick cavalry charge as deep as possible is what's needed.

The abominable "Dutch betrayal" unfortunately justifies the suspicions that Asger and you expressed in Munich. But we immediately rectified the situation.

For the two exclusions in Holland, we have already found better: a Hungarian² (also an architect) and an Israeli³ (who has organized others in his country). Purges certainly remain to be carried out in Munich in the Spur group, but Asger thinks that the moment has come to open a new front, first in England, then in Sweden—where there are already very intelligent partisans (have you received the experimental book⁴ by Jørgen Nash that just came out from Permild and Rosengreen?).

But if we are not the best, because the last situationists, we can already claim to be the best because we were the first, right?

Asger's preview at the Rive Gauche is today.

But Asger isn't going. Me neither: this is the new situationist practice for previews!

Most sincerely to Donna Augusta and to you,

Guy

1. Sandberg organized an industrial painting show at the Stedelijk Museum.

2. Attila Kotányi, Situationist in the Belgian section.

3. Jacques Ovadia.

4. *Stavrim, sonetter*, poetry by Jørgen Nash, drawings by Asger Jorn.

To Gallizio

Paris, 16 May 60

Dear Pinot,

Don't let your modesty trouble you: rest assured that we have carefully weighed our praise and admiration—and that your share is surely not more than you merit. On the contrary.

To quickly answer your questions:

1) Armando is not included in the expulsion of Oudejans and Alberts. He is on the contrary very anti-clerical. However his participation in a “Dutch Informal Group”—of publicity painters—poses a problem (of lesser seriousness and urgency). Constant has assured us that Armando was much closer to us than to that group. And we have entrusted Constant with the task of informing him that the obligation to choose will soon arise (but no amalgamation with the architect-priests ...).

2) We are doing nothing in Amsterdam, other than your show and the publication of your monograph. The next meeting of the SI is set for London in September. The journal should be out at the beginning of June. Your Amsterdam show should take place around June 1st—or a little after because of the delays from the industrial painting and the negatives.

3) I have no idea what the DFEK is doing with my film. It's their business and it's a mystery.

Among the “new recruits to the SI,” I just met Attila Kotányi. He is fantastic: and Asger is very pleased.

See you soon. Regards to Donna Augusta and to you,

Guy

To Zimmer, Prem, Sturm, Fischer

Paris, 17 May 60

Dear Friends,

I received your letter of May 13th yesterday. The explanation for the misunderstanding is the following: your first letter, sent to Amsterdam, was given to Constant by Sandberg, after the departure of Jorn and myself. Constant did not get your letter to us immediately, but only the moment he came to Paris. Wyckaert and I wrote to Zimmer (bei Neuschmidt, Kaulbachstrasse) immediately, April 15th. I think that his address change must be responsible for the loss of his letter.

Here's further news from Amsterdam: in March, we presented Sandberg with a plan that he accepted. But he was unable to guarantee the full amount of material means we were asking for (we had to write directly to certain organizations outside the Stedelijk Museum, each of which would have had the power to remove something from our experiment). Under these conditions, we wrote to Sandberg that we could not accept to involve the whole of our movement on such inadequate terms, and that the scheduled dates were cancelled. So the SI refused to do the show, two months ago. In June there will be *a one-man show* by Pinot Gallizio (the painting already shown in Paris in 1959, now belonging to Marinotti). That's it. There is no relationship between the two shows: we can now use Sandberg's museum only for individual shows.

Naturally, if we had done the projected show, we would have wanted you to participate as much as possible—and we had even already demanded the construction of a new wall in the museum so as to open a hole therein, according

to your anti-museum idea. You will see the plan published in the 4th issue of the journal (which is to appear around June 10th).

We will execute the plan somewhere other than Amsterdam, and together; soon I hope.

Warmly to you all,

G.-E. Debord

P.S. I have noted your break with Höfl. In Holland, we have had to exclude Oudejans and Alberts because they were going to build a church.

To Constant

Wednesday [25 May]

Dear Constant,

Yesterday I received the note in which you asked for your text¹ on New Babylon. Here is the copy.

But I have not received the other letter. As you alluded to this longer letter, I asked the concierge, who remembers putting two letters in my mailbox yesterday—where I found only one.

It seems that the neighborhood kids often amuse themselves with this kind of game, with the primary goal of collecting stamps (above all Dutch ones?).

This mishap is unfortunate: you will need to rewrite what you said in that letter.

The journal should appear around June 10th, with a magnificently experimental cover.

Regards to everyone,

Guy

1. "Description of the Yellow Zone," cf. *IS* n° 4, p. 23, at the end of which appears the name New Babylon, proposed by G. Debord in place of "Dériville."

To Constant

[Thursday] 2 June

Dear Constant,

I just got your letter from June 1st.

Concerning the practical details: I am sorry that you don't know the next issue better (which is to say, that you haven't been able to participate more). This is due to the material problems of distance: for example, Frankin too is familiar with only his own contribution. And even others are entirely in the dark. It's a shame. In any case, it was too late to discuss it in Amsterdam as this issue was already set.

I cannot say anything different about the cover: it is along the same lines as those done up till now—but more striking (the material is called lumaline. A sample is attached, though it's not the exact color). It's a metallic cover that has a distorting mirror effect. All the same it's just a detail.

Let's clearly distinguish the manner of the break, and that of the *bad feelings* that we might have, justly or otherwise, you against me and vice versa over some brief points.

The Dutch architects have not been "placed outside the SI" by us. *They put themselves there*, manifestly, and this came up again very clearly in Oudejans' honest and frank declarations (Monday night, at your place). Attila Kotányi said that Oudejans' form of words concerning the "architects of a new type" required by the SI was excellent. The only requirement being the ability to go ten years without building anything. Which is what he himself did.

As you said that I let myself be taken in, and as I imagine that this is not a judgment about the contents of the journal since you have not yet read it, you must be talking about the Pinot business.

Then, why are you not taking any notice whatsoever of what I told you, by telephone, Tuesday morning when I left Amsterdam? I said that I would henceforth refuse to have any contact with Pinot. It seems to me that you are only taking those elements that support your aggressive thesis into consideration. *This kind of dialogue*, between us, should cease immediately, *one way or another*. It's up to you to choose how.

I ask you therefore to note the definitive conclusion we adopted in our meeting Tuesday evening in Brussels:

Pinot and Giors are expelled from the S.I., for their persistent relations with Pistoï-Guasco-Tapié, and their sickening *arrivisme*.

I am sure that, here, we had reached the point where the SI had to make an instant choice (or had to be abandoned). Because you know well that I have always thought that "there are moments at which it is necessary to know how to choose."; that you don't have to teach me this; and that, if there has been a certain opportunism in the SI, I have been among those (you, too) who have *counterbalanced* it.

Jorn was the first supporter of the measure of expulsion. Needless to say that Maurice and Attila,¹ on the basis of our report, did not have a minute's hesitation (besides they are much more interested in the discussion that we had at your place about the conditions for our activities in architecture).

I hope all the same that this reassures you, if it is still possible to reassure you—and particularly insofar as you

1. Maurice Wyckaert and Attila Korányi.

had told me not long ago that a break with Pinot would never be accepted by the other situationists.

So, I think it better to wait before distributing your June 1st resignation letter. I ask you to write to me as quickly as possible *if, knowing the end of the business with Pinot, you stand by these terms or not.*

In case you uphold your resignation, it is understood that this will be a resignation decided by you alone, and in no sense an “expulsion”; that I will retain all the interest that I have in your research; but that this will be a *public and definitive choice* (because we have unfortunately too much to fight on all sides to blunt the only weapon that can guarantee our rigor: the definitive character of leaving the SI—which allows, for example, for the assurance that now Pinot won’t reappear.)

With the hope of a positive decision on your part, if you believe one possible. In any case, sincerely,

Guy

P.S. I hardly need to restate the fact that I regret my lightning visit to Amsterdam. I had to be at the printer in Paris yesterday. And had to rush across to The Hague to get the negatives, because, publishing the monograph on Pinot ourselves, we wanted *to announce his expulsion in the monograph itself* (which will have a certain effect on certain dealers and museums, I think). Forgive the hasty character of this letter. I also thought of sending you the latest news yesterday. But I was rather exhausted by the crazy rhythm of the trip.

To Constant

21 June 60

Dear Constant,

Other things were urgent, and a response to your letter of June 6th much less because it seemed itself to be a definitive answer that closes our debate. It must be stated clearly, however.

By writing that “in what presently remains of the SI, it would be too ridiculous to speak of expulsion or of resignation,” you confirm in a striking and unanswerable manner that you locate yourself outside of the SI, as your letter of June 1st already informed me (when you wrote “under these circumstances I can no longer take any responsibility for the future actions of the SI and I reserve the right to act in complete freedom ...”). But as you still left it to us to judge if your “distancing” would or would not be definitive, I warned you that a confirmed resignation would be irreversible precisely because what primarily constitutes the SI is this group control, expressed by expulsion—or, more rarely, resignation—a control about which there is no reason to believe it will be “ridiculous to speak.”

I note that your awareness of Pinot’s expulsion has not changed your opinion in any way. When we saw you in Amsterdam, you seemed inclined towards the view that the adventures of Pinot were deserving of unanimous leniency on our part: keep Pinot, then recover Oudejans. That’s your business. I want neither Pinot, nor Oudejans, nor their friends.

To regain one’s freedom in relation to a movement with which one no longer agrees is perfectly honorable:

it is even an obvious duty. I only regret that you ceased, at the last minute, to say so frankly and naturally. For I do not find it natural to see you write that the SI “collaborated” with Pinot’s show in Amsterdam; that this show was “inconsequential” in relation to our refusal of a general manifestation of the movement; that Pinot was excluded “afterwards,” as if it was for the exhibition; and that the SI “even so” published his monograph (including the announcement of this expulsion), as if we had not all granted the Bibliothèque d’Alexandrie an autonomy which does not involve the SI’s ideological responsibility. Nor do I find it natural to see certain of my friends described as “ambitious painters,” and myself a dupe. I don’t dispute the fact that one might, on all sides, uncover a host of faults among us, but do you think that someone can ever seriously reproach us for them? Passion leads you astray.

Similarly, that you should be “partially satisfied with my response,” or completely satisfied, or not at all, unfortunately has nothing to do with reality. I am with the SI and, as long as I am in it, I will keep a minimum of discipline that precludes all collaboration with uncontrollable elements: for, if you reject my friends en masse, I have the most serious reasons to hold yours, and their dubious constructions, at a distance (and I can discern no system of guarantees and sanctions to which you can resort in order to avoid *them* compromising *you*, as they have already begun to do in *Forum* by illustrating your description of unitary urbanism with a church).

My last letter was not in any way concerned with satisfying you about my personal case. I communicated the latest conclusions of the SI to you simply so that you could decide your own position in relation to us beyond the pretexts of the already resolved incident with Pinot. Which is done.

Unitary urbanism, of course, belongs to everyone. Those who care to will develop it, and all its effective realizations will interest me. Moreover I can say that the true development of unitary urbanism will inevitably be related to the search for global liberation, and not a pure formal construction, however large it may be. As Kotányi wrote in the latest issue of the journal (page 35): “On this scale, one can already *remove* the decisive elements of conditioning. But if, at the same time, we were awaiting a result from the scale, and not from the elimination itself, then we would have committed the greatest possible error.” But we will see the results. The SI, which holds no one against their will, *possesses* nothing—except its demand for totality.

Sincerely,

Guy

P.S. The relations between us can be placed on various grounds, from friendly coexistence, particularly concerning the exchange of information and documents (which appears *a priori* desirable and, toward this end, we would like to receive 200 copies of your monograph, to incorporate them into the collection in which it is the first volume) to the different degrees of polemic. I can guarantee, in the name of the Situationists, that it is up to you to choose those grounds where we will immediately follow you.

To Wyckaert

Wednesday 22 June

Dear Maurice,

I just got your second package of the copies of *Critique*. Thanks. Also send 1 or 2 packages to Asger in Albisola, where he should now be.

You should have received *IS* n° 4. I will send other small packages tomorrow, as the binding is very delicate (lumaline!), and only just finished. I think that the results are worth the trouble.

I am overwhelmed with work, between preparing and sending various little publications, a film,¹ another short feature that I should begin in a month for the same DFEK, and increasingly numerous meetings: I'm now surrounded by *candidates who want to join!* But I am operating carefully.

Regarding DFEK, we are trying to officially ("from the top") resolve our film transportation issues, between Paris and Copenhagen. In the meantime it's possible that someone will come by to get the copy at your place: apart from Asger, obviously, you can give it to two individuals if they come get it: Dahlmann Olsen and Erik Nyholm.² No one else. But I hope that you will be able show it before then, so that Attila and you at least can get to know this film.

The last exchange of letters between Constant and myself is attached. The last, in the strong sense of this term. I thought that Constant's "errors" were always caused by his hot-headed character, and his heavily one-sided judgment in many instances. But perhaps Asger was somewhat right to speak of provocation. I am surprised that the idiocy of the proposition of collaboration that he sent me,

1. *Critique of Separation*.

2. Erik Nyholm, a Danish friend of long-standing who taught Jorn ceramics.

and the insufferable ridiculousness of the tone in which it was made—after so many suspect Dutch disappointments—managed to elude a man who is all the same intelligent; and whom one could think very honest.

Clarify your planned trip to Normandy for us. We will try to come see you for a few days—despite the overloaded schedule.

Today I am sending Madga³ the texts for translation—save Frankin's text,⁴ the translation of which will be finished here within the week (this was terrible). Can we be assured of the printer's speed once he has them? Everything must absolutely be printed at the beginning of September.

Where is your monograph at? When you have received your final negatives, I will send Heimbürger the negatives to make for *IS* 5. He shouldn't have everything at the same time.

3. Magda Kotányi.

Regards to you all,

4. Frankin's "Programatic Sketches" (cf. *IS* n° 4, p. 16).

Guy

To Lawrence Alloway

Paris, 22 June 1960

Dear Sir,

The project of a Situationist lecture at the ICA on the occasion of our London conference is possible, on the following conditions:

Date: Wednesday 28 or Thursday 29, your choice.

Title: Declaration made in the name of the IVth conference of the Situationist International.

By *Maurice Wyckaert*.

This declaration will be spoken in English. I cannot assume responsibility for defining its contents in advance. If the ICA believes it useful to present some preliminary clarifications, the Institute can communicate the following information in its own name: the Situationist declaration will bear in general on the conditions of today's art and culture—the meaning of their global crisis—the direction of their transcendence—the theoretical and practical positions of the Situationist avant-garde—the perspectives of immediate action defined by the Situationist International.

Sincerely,

G.-E. Debord

To Zimmer and the Spur Group

Paris, 22 June 60

Dear Zimmer, dear Friends,

In response to your first card: the refusal to do a full group show in the Stedelijk Museum effectively leaves the possibility open for any element of the group to show at that location: as Constant and Gallizio have over the past year. For practical decisions in this regard, you should ask Asger Jorn, because I am not personally involved in this area of our activities.

In response to your second card: we are in agreement that you should publish our manifesto in the journal that you are preparing—whether in French or in German translation, your choice—with the sole condition that this

manifesto should be published *unedited* (without any cuts), with mention of its date: 17 May 1960—and its first publication in *Internationale Situationniste* (number 4, June 60).

You should have received the issue. Therein you have the text of the manifesto, and other useful information. The London conference will take place precisely from September 26th to 30th.

Regards,

G.-E. Debord

To Frankin

[End of June 60]

Dear André,

I just learned, from a letter from Claude, that you were ill. I am sorry to hear this. We really wish you a quick recovery.

The manifesto¹ seems to me, for the moment, to be the least bad variant of the possible manifestos, since a majority held closely to this declaration.

I think that UNESCO might be a really important gesture, on the condition that it avoids the pathological realm. Which amounts to saying: if the conditions of its realization are intelligently posed and assembled. And if not, of course, the effort shouldn't be made.

Thanks for the Musil. I'll read it as soon as possible.

Regards,

1. See the preceding letter.

Guy

To Straram

6 July 60

Dear Patrick,

The *Cahier pour un paysage à inventer*¹ hasn't reached Paris at all. It's really unfortunate, and I hope that you can send another copy?

Note that my personal address (1, Impasse de Clairvaux) is much more reliable than that of Montagne-Geneviève—which I only use to screen out people I don't know.

You sent 4 or 5 names some time ago. They're receiving the journal. I can even say that one of them, Jacques Seiler, just left Malassis without leaving another address.

Today I am sending a complete series of *IS* in a sealed envelope and by boat. Because I was told that either the moral or political sensibilities of the Canadian customs agents prompt them to go so far as to steal publications they deem to be unwholesome. Tell me if you want a certain number of copies of anything (save *IS* 2 which is sold out).²

I am also sending you a journal that just devoted a special issue to Malcolm Lowry.

Best wishes,

Guy

1. Published by Straram in Montréal: n° 1 brought together a dozen articles from *IS*.

2. A reprint will be done during the second trimester of 1962 by the printer Ch. Bernard.

To Jacqueline de Jong¹

6 July 1960

Dear Jacqueline,

I remember you. In response to your very nice letter, I see nothing better to suggest than you come to our next meeting in London, which starts September 25th. The Dutch Situationists have been effectively reduced to nothing: Constant's attitude seeming more and more suspect to us, we informed him that he had to change it or else consider himself someone who has resigned once and for all. He tried to avoid choosing and to speak to us again about his poor church-building friends; so that, as far as we are concerned, his case has been decided.

So, for the moment, all of Holland is yours. If you come to Paris before the London conference (and at a time when I am here too), I will be happy to see you. Let me know: 1, Impasse de Clairvaux (3rd)—telephone TUR 25-24.

If you need other publications or documents, ask for them at this address.

Sincerely,

Guy

1. Jacqueline de Jong, Dutch painter, introduced to Debord by Asger Jorn; Situationist in the Dutch section.

To Jorn

6 July

Dear Asger,

It is really sad that Christensen should have died the very moment your book came out. But shouldn't the coincidence really aggravate Denmark's bad conscience? The photo and dedication are really striking from that point of view.

There's a lot of news to speak to you about (I hope that we will see one another before London?). I am writing very quickly on some points.

The reaction of the Léger museum is most unusual: it's a confession of pure rage, a reckless excursion from the safe corner of "contemptuous silence."

Isou has an exhibition of paintings that the public is invited to make in a small bookstore on the rue de Seine.¹ It's an obvious rip-off of your show from May 59, with a theory that attempts to merge into Isou-ism—and in deliriously Isouean terms—all the *negative factors* that we have represented for him for several years now.

I am overwhelmed with letters and texts from the lamentable Estivals²: a response to my article from *IS* 4, in which he complains he has been cruelly trampled on, ridiculed before the gallery, etc. An idiotic study of *Form* with which he bravely tried to provoke the "break-up" of the SI "already begun by Rumney"! This guy would be the ideal polemical whipping boy if he was Minister of Culture, or even in place of Herbert Read. But I fear that we cannot justify the pursuit of a dialogue with such an obscure by-product of sociological-academic foolishness.

1. A show of "Supertemporal" art in June 1960.

2. Robert Estivals, director of the journal *L'Avant-garde artistique*.

Agreed on the one-year reprieve for the “Spur” faction. Let’s try to raise the level during this time.

Very interested in the situological and situographical development of topology. It will be necessary to stay rapidly informed of all the scientific conclusions about this—and to adapt or *détourn* them. The primary force of our position is to intervene therein as an artistic activity (with a game of gestures raised to the dignity of art) whereas the former dominant tendency was toward objective observation,

Regarding Sandberg, I thought I reported your analysis of his current role rather accurately. Your analysis is at least my own, if you will note that the text obviously means to say that these “reformists” are preferable to “reactionaries”—and to take the side against them, because we were indeed mistaken about Max Bill’s departure. And I never thought, or wrote, that some of these people didn’t have the most revolutionary intentions and tastes (in 1945 or today). Only, they are in a cultural and practical framework that makes any action that questions that framework *almost* impossible. This does not excuse the acts of sabotage by the Dutch during the preparation. But more than the money, it was enthusiasm for us that Sandberg was lacking in March. It is true that Sandberg knew *better than we did* the poverty of our Dutch section! In any case, I regret if editing “Die Welt als Labyrinth”³ was risky; but in no way did it express Constant’s opinion. Constant did not participate in editing *IS* 4 (he only contributed his article⁴ and the photo of the American stadium). But I think that all this is more apparent when one has seen the documents related to the break. On the other hand, if the tone of the editorial note is a little nonchalant and ironic—but surely not aggressive—for Sandberg, perhaps it will strike a balance with the slightly over-exaggerated politeness that Pinot, in our presence, has shown him?

3. cf. *IS* n° 4, p. 5.

4. “Description of the Yellow Zone” (*IS* n° 4, p. 23).

I am in agreement on the question of *time*. To put the accent on art that hasn't been conserved or any other situationist activity intended as "direct" is not, has never been, to choose amnesia or the refusal of history (which Estivals invented with his "presentism" label). In the terms taken up by your *Critique* (page 22), the value of art must no longer be sought in its *distinction* or its permanence. Which certainly does not exclude relative qualities and durations. And it is very true that the SI itself already has a history and also "*works for history*." I don't think that Frankin's notion of a "non-future" falls under this same reproach. But for me too it remains extremely mysterious!

Constant responded to my last letter only: "If passion leads me astray, indecision loses you altogether."⁵ Which is to say that he intends to call my decisions indecision when they are absolutely opposed to him. And he has not responded to the only question that is still before him: the 200 copies of the monograph, which will also determine the degree and forms of hostility that he is going to draw from us. We need to be prepared for various forms of pressure, especially on this question of the monographs. I have already been careful to send him only one copy of *IS 4*. He will not receive another one unless he candidly settles the practical questions that remain in abeyance.

Pinot's monograph will be ready *by July 15th*. I am enclosing a letter from Pinot, rather amusing (and candidly returning to the theme of the division of labor between "tough guys" and prostitutes in a same movement). It is the second one that I've received: in the previous one he was already talking about Constant's show that he is arranging with Genia. Thus, we surely will have a chance to laugh in the fall: it's safe to bet that the pure-hearted Constant will rediscover his dear Pinot in Genia's Gallery, entirely happy to give some

5. By telegram.

lectures on unitary urbanism in the company of Jean-Jacques Lebel or other squeaky-clean anti-trial⁶ house thinkers. Perhaps he will finally go to Brazil, with the famous Sořhana. All this is moving so quickly.

Jacqueline de Jong wrote me that she was joining the SI. She asked if she could contact the rest of the Dutch section. I responded that we had to sweep out these leftovers too, and that she could come directly to the London conference. Nice way to hold the fort in Holland, I think?

Regards,

Guy

6. A collective demonstration "for the human right to self-determination" organized by Alain Jouffroy and Jean-Jacques Lebel.

To Jorn

Saturday 16 July

Dear Asger,

Agreed on the definition of expulsion. The lack of interest and agreement should effectively be expressed, "made official," as a goal, a *suppression of reciprocal obligations*, and in no way an aggression. As I wrote to Constant, we want to spare everyone the problems of a "dramatic phase." Only in the case where they themselves would not recognize therein their own advantage, and would be aggressive, would we follow on this level. As we have already been forced to do in the past on occasion; and always to our honor. Because we have always been able to do so with *detachment*. Two documents are attached: 1) the anticipated conclusion to Constant's phoney position, and a response that will undoubtedly contribute to its

clarification ... 2) An article in which *even Charles Estienne*¹ is forced to take a sympathetic and smarter position against the two lamentable cretins who are Genia's protégés.

I will take up topology as soon as possible. And launch a general alert in the SI on the theme: "What do you know about topology?" If the Americans try to trivialize the problem, we can always remark that I brought this notion up in *IS* 3, page 37 (extremely briefly, it's true).

Have you received the *Critique of P.E.* that Maurice sent to Albisola? I have distributed almost all of the copies that I received here. I'm afraid that one package may be being held by customs.

Frankin wrote that he found the *Critique* excellent, and feels that we have "established a capital link for the disappearance of money" in the coming society. Bravo!

Frankin also just wrote a play. I've only read the preface thus far, but it seems quite shattering and experimental. It is in any case excellent that our presence be extended little by little in all the existing areas of the arts. Through this progression, we will be able to impose a field of group action. Constant's theoretical error (to say nothing of his practical maneuvers) can be expressed thus: he skirted the real and multiple *problems of architecture*, by *assuming them to be resolved*, whereas we have hardly begun to envision the terrain, and he leapt directly *beyond even urbanism* into the production of models (which is to say, under these conditions, making a sculpture that was more *imperialist* than any of the other arts had ever been against its neighbors).

If we can reach the theater people and urge them to present a play like Frankin's, we will also open an important new sphere for situationist scandal. We need to think about that.

1. Charles Estienne, an art critic.

2. The postscript from Jorn's letter of 12 July 1960: "Pinot has returned to the economic role that I play in the situationist movement. I would really like it if he had no more unfavorable things to say about the movement in the future based on economics, which I hope is only a groundless worry, and to avoid any misunderstandings on this question to specify that my interest in the situationist movement is purely personal and passionate in a direct way, and if the inevitable developments of social circumstances require my expulsion from the movement this will in absolutely no way change my purely economic attitude toward this movement. The economic surplus that my social situation as a painter offers me finds its best place in the situationist movement, even if the same movement is obliged to attack me so as to attack a situation from which I cannot escape, but which disrupts the movement. I well know that such a situation is *possible* even if I do everything I can to avoid it. But no man is capable of anticipating everything. This in any case gives me an assurance about the justification of my presence in the movement, if we are in agreement that this problem changes nothing in relation to my economic support of the movement. I think that to the extent that the situationist movement will develop many people absorbed in specific work, which prevents them from participating in the situationist task directly, will be happy to place the surplus of their pent-up energy in the movement in this way."

Pinot's monograph has encountered other little delays. I'm thinking I won't be able to send it before July 20.

For the lumaline, I would be very hesitant, even if money did start to roll into the SI. The question must be weighed. The effect is obviously superb. But the price is terribly high: 100,000 for covers (for only 1,600 copies of the journal), but another 60,000 in additional costs at the printer, representing a very long job of folding and binding entirely by hand—the machines break the lumaline, which shreds immediately. And we nearly lost the entire stock at this stage of assembly (through this process we have had less than a 10% relative loss, being poorly bound copies).

See you soon. Regards,

Guy

P.S. I think that the postscript² to your letter is economically just. It will be a useful argument for "propaganda" in regard to certain people. Because Pinot who, while in the SI, had already rather underhandedly sought to belittle your role by debating this question of finance, will certainly make more of it now that he is outside (these things obsess him a little). But practically, there is no problem. I think that we have collectively an enormous task before us that has hardly begun. If a few people can do it in the near future (I hope to be among them), and I hope that you are not thinking of devoting yourself to a specific task, in any case not before you have been confirmed in your position as director general of UNESCO.

To the whole SI

18 July 1960

Asger Jorn asks that we pass on the following questions:

— What do you know of TOPOLOGY? (what books, or articles, with their references).

— Do you see a relationship to be established between the current topological knowledge and the problems of constructing Situations? A situationist use of topology?

Send replies to Jorn, Albisola Mare (Savona), Italy—or to the SI in Paris.

To Straram and Portugais¹

Paris, 21 July 1960

Dear comrades,

Only yesterday did I receive the first issue of the *Cahier pour un paysage à inventer*, as well as the letter from Patrick dated May 31. I can assure you, in the name of the SI, that we fully approve of the concerns and—in the main—the tone of the group expressed therein. Obviously we also approve of the use that you have made of our texts and, specifically, the presentation that Patrick made.

Agreed as to the existing solidarity, and on the perspective of research for the development of common action.

Sincerely,

G.-E. Debord

1. Louis Portugais, Canadian filmmaker, collaborator on the *Cahier pour un paysage à inventer*.

P.S. I will write to Patrick at greater length very soon, and I will send the requested publications tomorrow. I would like to receive as quick as possible 5 or 6 copies of the *Cahier* to distribute to the sections of the SI (almost all the situationists being outside of France). Use my address: 1, Impasse de Clairvaux, Paris 3rd.

To Frankin

Sunday [24 July]

Dear André,

Affairs in the Congo have taken a still more tragic turn, with the announcement of a conspiracy to place the Kasai and the Kivu in secession with the Katanga. Are we headed for colonial re-conquest, toward a new Korean war? What now seems certain is that, in the short term, if the expeditionary body of the UN doesn't drive the Belgian forces *from the six provinces*, the chaos won't stop until there's complete war, or rather, the organized liquidation of what authorities of the Congolese "State" there are in order to make a clean sweep for total anarchy, and a new juridical void that will permit the maintenance of all the divisions. Lumumba and Kasavubu weren't exaggerating when they cabled K.¹ that their life was in danger. They are in a position that recalls the end of Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg:² practically in the soldiers' hands. It's rather touching, a government leader as disarmed as Lumumba. In the end he handled himself well by always choosing the party of the masses that overthrew him (he really had to rely on that famous

1. Kennedy.

2. Assassinated during the Spartacist insurrection in Berlin in 1919.

public Force, as the sole instrument of the state ...). At best, the installation of the UN troops will mean the crackdown on the spontaneous tendencies of the Congolese revolution (workers on strike, soldiers that wanted to expel all the managers of exploitation).

What has happened in the Congo over the last 12 days should be studied carefully from every point of view and it seems to me an essential experiment in revolutionary conditions in the Third World. The strongest probability is that those who have pushed for the recent extension of secession will assassinate Lumumba³—if he is not protected from now on by UN troops—because it is all too clear that he will never accept the division of the Congo, whose legitimate authority he represents, into two equal parts (it was already rather unlikely that he would not resort to counterattacking Katanga itself). And what is the Belgian right going to do given their talent for manipulating public opinion?

I hope to be able to read your play soon. You told me that it is now being read. By what publisher? To begin with, naturally, the preface will be perfect in *IS* 5.⁴ I think that it will be most effective if the play is put on by whatever “avant-garde actors” there might be. If we are capable of taking action soon in some theatrical places, it would be best. There it might have a decisive impact on the prehistory of the anti-spectacle.

In the past you spoke—wrote—to me about a form equally adapted to stage and radio. But what I understand of this makes me think that its entire impact depends on its presentation on stage.

I entirely approve of the terms of the preface, constituting a general program for a new theater, and this preface must be promoted as soon as possible as a program. I am very unfamiliar with the problems and attainments

3. This will happen six months later on 17 January 1961.

4. “Preface to the Theatrical Unity ‘No One and the Others’” published in *IS* n° 5, p. 27.

of the theater, which I have only dwelt on very briefly. Below I have recopied a note from May 5 that sketched out two contradictory (complementary) possible developments of its present state. I am copying while abridging a little.

1) A future (linked to the *dérive*) that would put actors in the street (as the theater in its phase of dislocation had already begun to do by occasionally slipping into the audience). These actors would not have roles. At most a *theme*, a motif much more sustained than in the *commedia dell'arte*, to intervene in urban life, also taking urban zones into account, of *settings traversed*. These actors could specialize in either scary or surprising roles; or represent sad or happy possibilities in life. They would create a new spectacle without location (a break in the space of play), without order, that no one would need to understand, but in which everyone would be able to find opportunities for living. This new spectacle would thus depart de facto from the sphere of the spectacle.

2) At present, under present conditions, a negation of theater through an *excess of realism*. A meeting of some characters in a normal location. A kind of Sacha Guitry (who loved to act in *his own home*) uninteresting, lacking spirit. Normal conversation, which is to say not very intelligent, not very stupid. A *permanent* and empty spectacle, like life—not beginning or ending *that day*—(the “three unities” *under the microscope*), with brief overtures of what could be. (With the following pre-Situationist element: the actors here reproach themselves for not being actors—in the sense that they say “Our life would be better built ...”) Thus a project of anti-theater against Ionesco-Beckett.

I thought of a precise story, a kind of anti-story as well that had ended in those days. And I rather saw such a play as an exact reconstitution of interactions, such and such a

day for 3 or 4 hours (the play requiring at least this length so as to lend it its particular “realism”), between myself and 2 other people. Sufficiently false and failed interactions, to suit this period in theater; but all the same unusual enough not to evoke vaudeville in any way, nor drama. Since then, naturally, I’ve done something entirely different. But what do you think of my second point? I think it would go in the same direction as you.

I hope that one of these days we will be able to do something in collaboration, in the cinema especially, where our working hypotheses most coincide, I think. Until then I will be filming—only in September because my cameraman has a prior booking with the vile Chabrol—a little, much simpler thing.⁵ A general appeal regarding topology is attached.⁶ Are you someone who can shed light on this question? I can’t really say that I can.

Regards,

5. *Critique of Separation*.

Guy

6. cf. Circular of 18 July 1960.

To Jorn

Paris, 26 July

Dear Asger,

Yesterday I received a nice letter from Prem. The Germans have heard that Eisch had written a letter to the SI “after his visit with Pinot, concerning the Pinot affair, etc. We don’t know its contents and, at present, we don’t know his opinion on situationist ideas. In any case, it’s his private opinion” (end of quotation).

I don't know anything about this letter. Perhaps you received it? This seems to indicate that after having accepted his departure "in friendship" (which is what Giors wrote me. He was in Paris, but I didn't want to see him), Pinot is now trying to plot from the German side. But Eisch was already separated from the German group. And the others have already disassociated themselves from what Eisch has to say.

I'm telling Prem:

1) the general reasons and the irreversible nature of the separation with Pinot.

2) that he and his comrades are, at the moment, responsible for the SI in Germany, and that if they have separated from Eisch, then we have too (this is the only coherent politics for us since we are playing the cards of unity and disciplining the "Spur" group).

Apart from this, Prem announced that they were working on translating the journal and your *Critique*; and that they are going to try "to study and use topology."

Are you happy with the monograph on Pinot? I wrote a (rather low-key) press release and at present have sent one package of 10 copies to Pinot, another to you. Should I send more right now?

Regards,

Guy

P.S. Gus has not yet paid his final third. But I think that he is in good faith. The atmosphere is friendly; and I delayed the beginning of filming until the end of August.

To Prem

Paris, 26 July 60

Dear Prem,

I've made note of your new address, and am sending the documents there.

I did not know about Eisch's letter, but in any case, Pinot's exclusion was decided by a meeting held in Brussels at the beginning of June, and represented the opinion of the vast majority of the situationists.

Pinot was increasingly linked, publicly, with people who are our enemies (in Turin and in Paris). He had been put on disciplinary notice by the SI twice, and he didn't take heed of it. Pinot himself knew his case to be so indefensible that he did not protest our decision. On the contrary, he thanked us because we were allowing him to leave us without polemic (and we had published his monograph after all). If he wants to start a polemic now, we have all the means and the arguments to make it regrettable for him and his defenders.

On the other hand, I was under the impression that Eisch was no longer with the Spur group?

You are, at this moment, the only representatives of the SI in Germany, and if Eisch has separated from you, he can no longer be qualified as a situationist; and the SI is no longer interested in him. We have confidence in you, collectively, for deciding who can participate in our activities in the German section.

I hope that you will be in the "German delegation" at the London conference?

Most sincerely to you, and to Zimmer, Sturm, and Fischer.

G.-E. Debord

To Straram

Paris, 26 July

Dear Patrick,

I received your letter from July 18th. I liked the photos and the declaration made to *La Presse*¹ is excellent.

As I already told you, I should write you one or several long letters, regarding the details of the *Cahiers* and our problems. And even more generally, because “valuable interlocutors” are still rare, since we have, as far as it was possible, been in past contact. But I haven’t had the time and today I have to leave Paris, for about ten days probably. So I will limit myself here to immediate practical details.

Yesterday I sent five registered packages (by boat) containing respectively: 5 copies of *IS* 1—5 of *IS* 3—4 of *IS* 4—5 *Report* and 4 *Critique* by Jorn—3 copies of *Mémoires*.

Today I am sending *La Somme et le Reste* and the new edition of the *Critique of Everyday Life*.² The other books will follow later.

If Portugais’ trip to Europe has already begun September 25th, the best would be for him to attend our next “international meeting,” which will gather in London that date. But I imagine that it’s unlikely, since it is still early in the Fall. At the least, he should contact me in Paris by telephone at TURbigo 25-24. The *Cahier*, from what I now hear said, has been handed round among a dozen thinkers—doubtless as much strangers to you as to me—in Saint-Germain-des-Prés before being returned to me. They speak of it, comment on it. Which is amusing for all that. But it’s a waste of time.

1. On July 2, 1960, *La Presse*, a daily newspaper in Montréal, published “So as not to be Complicit,” a protest by Patrick Straram against the two-year suspended sentence handed down to the writer and journalist Georges Arnaud for *failure to report an offense*. Arnaud had reported in *Paris-Presse* on a lecture given by Francis Jeanson, sought for being the head of a support network for the F.L.N.

2. Both by Henri Lefebvre.

As I am leaving before having received further copies of the *Cahier*, please send them quickly directly to each of the following addresses:

Jacqueline de Jong, 85 Weteringschaus, Amsterdam, Holland

Attila Kotányi, 26 rue du Monastère, Brussels, Belgium

André Frankin, 285 rue Saint-Gilles, Liège, Belgium

Asger Jorn, Albisola Mare (Savona) Italy

H.-P. Zimmer, Siegfriedstrasse 11/1 Munich-Schwabing, German Democratic Republic

R. Dahlmann Olsen, Wiedersvej 16 Dragør (København), Denmark

Jacques Ovadia, 33 rue Arlosoroff, Ramat-Gan, Israel

Without forgetting three or four copies to me, if that hasn't already been done.

Best Wishes,

Guy

N.B. Our former address in Amsterdam, that you published, is now in the hands of the enemy.

To Zimmer and the Spur group

Paris, 8 August 60

Dear Zimmer, dear Friends in Spur,

Thanks for sending your journal, it's a very fine thing. I think that other issues should come out later and be the abiding conduit for your group's ideas the way the journal *Cobra* was.

I'm asking you to do two things as soon as possible:

1) Send me a French translation of your text that is at the end: this will be used in n° 5 of *Internationale Situationniste*.¹

2) Send a copy of *Spur* directly to the situationists at the following addresses—in case you haven't already:

D. Olsen

Asger

Maurice

Attila

Jacqueline de J.

Frankin

Ovadia

(I am distributing others here).

It's good that Eisch is no longer with you because the fact that he is now making a *faintly modernist* version of old *monuments to dead heroes* proves that it is not Eisch who is striking a blow against cultural conformism but rather conformism which is striking a blow against the avant-garde by *taking Eisch into its camp*. Today's prevailing conformism no longer believes in the Hitlerian style of art. It annexed Eisch, who immediately sold the subversive reputation he had obtained by participating in your group's scandals.

Gallizio and Constant are no longer in the SI and cannot be considered as co-signers of the manifesto. But this isn't a serious mistake, I mention it so that it can be taken into account in the future.

Excellent demand for the Art House! UNESCO will support your attack, once we are part and parcel of it.

Sincerely,

G.-E. Debord

1. Declaration of the Spur group for the creation of a unitary art against all modern forms of artistic specialization, published in *Spur* n° 1, August 1960.

To Constant

Thursday 11 August

Dear Constant,

Arriving in Paris, I found your letter from August 2nd. I immediately sent the 10 requested journals. And now I am responding in detail.

As I have already written (June 21), I would like our relations, *the moment that they left the terrain of the SI*, to be situated on the *friendliest level possible*. I am pleased that you are now responding in this way.

You tell me that, if you have not responded positively earlier, it was because of your suspicions about a passage from *IS 4*.¹ Here is the clear explanation.

This passage (like all of *IS 4*) was already printed when we talked in Amsterdam May 30th. It was therefore not written from the perspective of the opposition that has since taken place between us, it should be noted.

The background to this particular incident is as follows: writing to you December 15th that you could use what you wanted from my former-article² and consider it as “communal material,” “without making any mention, extract from ...” because the text, with edits, “would fall in the category of art criticism; and you know that I absolutely want no part of that”—it is true that I hadn’t *expressly* said: “without my signature.” But it is rigorously impossible to imagine a different meaning to that letter if one reads it closely. You told me that an unsigned text had little value as a preface: that’s true, but that isn’t an argument. The clear solution, in such a case, was to publish the text as a whole (because after all, why not?), or if you didn’t agree with the text, to take another (I

1. Cf. *IS* n° 4, p. 13.

2. “Constant and the path of unitary urbanism”, used to preface Constant’s exhibition in Essen: *Konstruktionen und Modelle* in January 1960.

think that the excised portions *added* a lot more than they *detracted* from the very positive assessment of you. But you were free to judge otherwise: not to change *my way of judging*). In Brussels, I admitted the misunderstanding, which is to say that I abstained from reproaching you for having overstepped my request—since my letter was not perfectly clear. But if I abstained from a direct reproach, and the public polemic, *this does not oblige me to renounce the right to let people who would read the text know that it did not correspond to my thought*. Which is to say to my thoughts concerning art and its criticism; this isn't about withdrawing my positive thoughts about *your work*. I'm emphasizing here these theoretical rights, but I obviously did not think of exercising them. But here is the final detail: you then said to me, in Maurice's presence, that the cuts concerned only a few phrases at the beginning. I believed it. Only two or three months later did I accidentally come back to the text. I compared it—this was in German which wasn't easy for me—and I found that the end was also missing. And that the cuts included almost half of the text. This being in contradiction to your assurances, that the responsibility lay formally with the gallery—who would therefore have made new cuts. Moreover, having decided at this stage *to disown the incomplete text*, my intention was in no way, however, to attack you. This is why I did not say that the text was — not about Constant but—about “Constant *AND* U.U.” Citing your name there would have implicated you. I had said enough to enable the *recognition of the text*, not to designate one person or another responsible for it.

Now you write that you yourself had reduced the published text to only a third of my own. I cannot discuss whether or not it was 1/3, 6/10, or half. But this is far from what you told me at the end of January at Maurice's

place, and I don't know what to think about this new misunderstanding. (In any case, I consider my responsibility sufficiently disclaimed by the note in *IS* 4 should the matter end there.)

Nevertheless I repeat that this is entirely preliminary to the current problem. It is without doubt that your contribution, not only to this issue 4 but to all situationist work over a long period, gives you the right not only to these 10 paltry copies but to as many copies as you would like of all our publications. You know very well that there has never been any bargaining to do—and that these objects are a mere drop in the commodity ocean—but that the entire question is, as I proposed on June 21st, that of maintaining the *exchange of information* in the largest sense of the term information. I find this personally and objectively desirable. But it's your choice, and you have not yet responded in any way. In the past I often saw disagreements quickly turn extreme (transformed, from a simple refusal to be collectively engaged on an entire program and its tactics of realization, into a refusal of any relation whatsoever), and you have yourself sometimes manifested a tendency toward anger, which might now result in such a choice.

I specify that if, during our last discussions in the SI, I tried to patiently moderate those reactions of yours that seemed to me to aggravate real oppositions, I happily don't have to do anything like that now. Mine is in no way to judge or orient the attitude that you will take toward the SI. But insofar as you seem to want, as I do, this attitude to be a mutually cordial one, and in any case polite, it would be good to relax as much as possible the current atmosphere of suspicion in regard to ideas and practice. Because if the suspicion remains general, polemic will fatally carry it away in the end.

I am not directly concerned with the “Bibliothèque d’Alexandrie,” but I find it useful that you have written that there is “no reason to think” that you will refuse us the monographs. Given the project of a bound collection, a specific question arises: how can you add to that collection? Settling this question will certainly contribute to dissipating the atmosphere of suspicion and ill will that we can still reject.

It is with this same goal that I have just given you a long explanation of my position concerning the note in *IS* 4.

Sincerely,

Guy

To Wyckaert

Good news: I don’t have a toothache any more. After twelve days, it’s a relief ...

Saturday [13 August 60]

Dear Maurice and Rob,

Thank you for your card. It’s the top of its range.

I sent various items of printed matter to place de la Justice recently. I hope that you will receive them.

Send me your *exact future address in Alseberg*. I think that it is the permanent address that we should use for our activities in Belgium (and even for the Bureau of Unitary Urbanism)?

Next week I’m coming to see Attila in Barneville.

I’m also thinking of stopping in Brussels on the way to London (unless I don’t have time). I don’t know what

arrangements Asger has made for the conference. He wrote me that he would see to everything in September!

I propose that Maurice send me here the maximum number of usable elements for his biographical note. I will do it when I get back.

Pinot took his expulsion very well. He declared himself very moved and happy that we were allowing him to leave us "in friendship." He must have feared that Asger intended to exact reprisals from art dealers ... He didn't protest the fairness of our decision in any way. I know this through the Italians who visited Asger, and through a letter from Giors, who was in Paris, but whom I obviously did not have time to meet. His letter was very friendly all the same.

Asger has been very enthusiastic since this purge (with the seriousness of the charge having grown more certain since then), and since his discovery of topology.

Do you know topology? I already sent you the questionnaire. It seems that a familiarity with topology is required in order to see how right the SI has been!

In Canada some ten adventurers gathered around Patrick Straram just published the first issue of a journal entitled *Cahier pour un paysage à inventer*, which is more than 3/4 situationist, merely by virtue of the fact that our texts are abundantly reprinted therein. I will send the journal to you as soon as possible. They offer it as a point of departure for an as yet unspecified action common action. One of them will be coming to Europe toward the fall. So we have reached other continents, and await the next planets.

See you soon. Regards,

CONGO FOR THE CONGOLESE!

UNESCO FOR THE SITUATIONISTS!

Guy

To Constant

24 August 60

Dear Constant,

I don't attach such great importance to the monographs. It was merely inseparable from an entire set of relations, with a set of people as well, it is impossible not to take that into consideration.

The 150 copies that you propose is a perfectly satisfactory quantity. Shipping them is not really too pressing. Maurice's monograph won't come out for another month at least. I don't want to continue a polemic over various details from the past. My last letter reproached you for nothing: it explained a gesture that you questioned. It seems to me that you read it, and that you responded to it more from a polemical perspective, given the term "abuse of confidence." The responsibility of an editorial board means that it controls—with others—the general line of a publication. It does not mean that one is sovereignly placed beyond all criticism (even direct, which was not the case here); nor that one personally approve each line.

Finally, if I have often advised to you moderation on certain occasions, it was not about moderating your avant-garde positions (see, on the contrary, the discussion in April 59, on the "Call to Intellectuals and Revolutionary Artists"). I was advising you to calmly say what you implacably sought: Pinot's exclusion?—or whatever else (Oudejans' return)?—and I think that even if you simply wanted to break with the SI in any case, we would all have saved time if you had coolly stated your intention.

I don't really understand what you call my "insane accusation" (perhaps it's about the discussion to which I

said that Maurice is witness?). But in fact, I accuse you of nothing. Indeed I persist in desiring a “mutually cordial attitude” in the future. And there is no doubt that the pursuit of tedious private disputes on particular points from the past will lead to a general and public polemic—on the contrary.

Sincerely,

Guy

To Wyckaert

Wednesday 24 August

Dear Maurice,

Regarding the *Spur* journal: an exact and complete translation of the Germans’ text, which is at the end, should be made (by either you or Magda, or both of you together).

It is in any case indispensable that we have this translation *before our meeting in London*, because there will undoubtedly be matter for discussion therein.

Apart from this, agreed on the pseudo-Haese and the efforts of neo-Ensor painting. Asger recently told the Germans that we will really be able to take them into consideration only from the moment they have attained an immediately visible originality, against all these other contemporary tendencies in Germany. And Asger offered this example: “As the Cobra group did.” So now they are trying to create a Cobra style!

Have you received, or has Attila received, the Canadian journal *Cahier pour un paysage à inventer*?

I am very interested by the great palisade to be made in the orchard (it should be done before the next issue of *IS*). Unfortunately, very improbable that we can come see you right now: time, which is money—and the money itself—is lacking.

But we are in good spirits. We are mobilizing for the new session, which seems likely to be feverish, all down the line, starting with London.

Where are we with your monograph: financially (the aid from a cultural organization that we spoke rather vaguely about?) and I think that I have to revise Caspari's French translation? And write your biographical note?

Constant wrote to me about a number of small detailed arguments: he declared that he wants us to maintain very friendly relations; but he can't stop amassing reproaches over all the poor treatment that we subjected him to while he was in the SI.—In the end, he promised to give us 150 copies of his celebrated monograph. This is essential for the Bibliothèque d'Alexandrie, which could thus do a sumptuous bound edition of 200 copies of all the monographs (Asger's main idea, since the "Bibliothèque de Cobra"). Obviously, the shipment has not yet taken place.

Is Attila thinking of going to Liège soon? There is a certain commotion around Frankin there now who is very enthusiastic at the moment (with, apparently, possibilities of using Radio-Liège shortly). I think it would be good to make a quick raid on Liège—*and that you take part in it* (also because you know Frankin, who sometimes has a disconcerting manner, etc.).

A final thought: if your trip to Liège was set, you mustn't forget to write to Frankin to let him know the date. Otherwise, your trip may well coincide with a period of roving on the part of Frankin, during which his

whereabouts, apart from various sightings of him in a host of dives, are a complete mystery to everyone.

See you soon. Regards to Rob and yourself,

Guy

To Straram

25 August 60

Dear Patrick,

I'm back in Paris, and in condition to write, after a series of trips that was longer than I anticipated. But I've at last discovered mescal: it's very good.

As we have sometimes written to one another, it is very difficult to return, through letters, to a group discussion. But it becomes necessary, and at the same time possible, to begin one. On the basis of texts published here and in Canada.

The whole of *Cahier* n° 1 is interesting and positive. Moreover, for me—and other friends—it is an encouraging response, a sign of recognition in the curious adventure that is unfolding. Nothing is more valuable than possible accomplices in such a game.

Considering the contributors to *Cahier* in detail, it must be said that it's a kind of common front which is still probably not very distinct for some (therefore, yet to be understood and judged in its development) since highly advanced elements mixed with a few conformist throwbacks are to be found therein. Gilles Leclerc¹ is in a muddle that is opening up merely to God and his

1. Gilles Leclerc, "Prometheus or Schweitzer."

“rotten egg stench.” His vocabulary is affected by it as well. The partial truths mixed in are altered by it. Advise him to give up the prospect of heaven; and hell. Perhaps also to read the philosophical works of the young Marx to learn “respect for intelligence,” because it is very bad to remain at the mental age of 14, especially when one has spent 14 years admiring Carrel, Koestler, and Malraux (this idea of human grandeur is enough to turn you into a deist). Miron² is your Artaud. Nice. But to scream, you need to scream louder. To be silent, perhaps be silent more briefly?

Talents for language (Gilles Hénault, etc. P.M. Lapointe does a good Éluard.³) All this should be able to find a field of application. This is the problem with poetry—its nature in the future and today. You describe some indispensable conditions of the *new poetry*, in “Gaal under Cellophane.” It must be repeated often.

If I mainly express reserves, which you must have already had yourself, it obviously began with my first movement of approval, of which there is no need to say more.

Outside the theoretical texts, I especially like “The Air of Swimming”⁴; included as a form of writing similar to a complete account of moments in an adventure (the outmoded Surrealism of books like *Nadja* and *Mad Love* is *formally* on the way toward an expression drawn directly from everyday life, from the experience of its transcendence, serving to modify that life.) I added, on reading it, the stories that I myself lived in April 57. This would make a striking book, mixing chapters written by different “authors” from this group at the beginning of the 1950s. On its break-up, its *diaspora*, the trips of various kinds, its flight across the same portion of time.

From a theoretical point of view, the *Cahier* is defined by its program of each contributor’s radically free

2. Gaston Miron, “Note from a Local Man.”

3. Gilles Hénault, “Time Arborizes,” “Brawl,” “Graffiti;” Paul-Marie Lapointe, “Poem.”

4. By Patrick Straram.

expression. This is the central point of the gathering; which also sets its limits. Total personal freedom of expression, for everyone, is a slogan for a profound truth *on the scale of global revolution*, at the highest level of the reconstruction of society (and thus everything that contradicts it is a new alienation). But it's an inadequate slogan for an "avant-garde," living concretely in the presently dominant social conditions in which it necessarily inscribes its research. This research should thus be *specified*, as to its risks and dangers (beginning with the risk of greater separation, of relative solitude). For, otherwise, the demand for free expression, for "sincerity" can fall automatically (without anyone intending it, of course; without even anyone easily understanding it) into the petit-bourgeois "expression" of this prefabricated "unique-individual" who resembles precisely every other petit-bourgeois at bottom and in the form of what he considers to be his singular, privileged, "profound" expression. Poetry is presently this touchstone, a man is defined by what he means, practically, by poetry; what he contents himself with under this heading (here Hegel's phrase: "The satisfaction of an individual corresponds to the greatness of his loss.")

True free expression is linked to the rest of liberated life (to behavior). And cannot be a separate, specialized expression—the expression of prisoners for other prisoners. Philosophical comprehension had begun rejecting illusions about its *freedom* over one hundred years ago, with the observation that we have "interpreted the world" enough, the task was to change it.

This appeared everywhere in the arts and writing in the twentieth century, as a negation of the arts. The positive seed contained in this negation manifested itself a little in Surrealism, through great distortions, a

constant pressure to return to the past. And with reverse infirmities, but a still more serious poverty, in other modern research, especially in the 1920s (functionalism, constructivism, suprematism, etc.). Our generation is at the turning point where that positive demand has begun to be affirmed in culture and practical life—therefore also in the concept of revolution (it was only time). I think that it is our task. Not easy.

I am not forgetting that the first printed “situationist” declaration was distributed by you in the Ville-Évrard bulletin⁵ (in fact, is this charming anecdote transmissible, or would it put you at risk with some police body or other?). We can hope that, in the future, a group of people presently gathered around the *Cahier*, or of those that this publication brings to you, will become radicalized in a more explicitly situationist activity, even if Canadian conditions demand that such a group participate in a more open and more vague forum of expression.

I think I would need to give you a lot of explanations and information on the SI. But I am too involved in it to make out the main questions that must arise from a distance. Would you like to send a certain number of specific questions, practical as well as ideological? Drawing up such a questionnaire would probably save time and allow for clear and immediate answers.

The differences since the 52–53 era, meaning the period of eight or nine months when we were together, are too important for us to be able to speak of a mere transformation of the Lettrist International into the SI (even though, essentially, this was really the development of this approach that was also initiated elsewhere). Though we are very much in a semi-clandestine state—still encountering quite incredible hostility, though a very honorable one in our eyes—one can say that our

5. Patrick Straram was interned at the asylum at Ville-Évrard in 1953 for having assaulted passers-by by demanding, at knife-point, that they: “Say I’m handsome or I’ll stab you.” The bulletin was *Le Tremplin*, a “Monthly journal entirely created by the patients at the Center for Treatment and Social Readaptation in Neuilly-sur-Marne (Seine-et-Oise).”

means have considerably grown. Progress as well in our comprehension, the most radical critique, theory. The undeniable backsliding in everyday life (far too many lulls; the unfortunate geographical dispersion of the SI at present must also be taken into account, as well as the transition from what was pure play to “work,” in a certain sense of this term). The principle difference is undoubtedly that we have accepted defining ourselves sociologically—“officially” since the Munich conference—as producers of contemporary modern culture, even if it is at the extreme limit of its modernism, of its negation. Thus I am making short feature films right now—highly experimental it’s true (like L. Portugais, I am a filmmaker and a Capricorn⁶). It is unfortunate to specialize, and even more, a danger. But to refuse to is to accept specializing in the repetition of teenage conveniences as a means of postponing confrontation with the real problem of culture and of life: general practical subversion or nothing. We are now engaged in the organization of a long struggle: “A life that is a critique must be conceived and created.” So many people that we have seen make so much noise have settled down completely, in the most ridiculous fashion, sometimes the most ignoble. Neither freedom nor intelligence are given once and for all. And their simulacra are naturally much more fragile, they decompose with the times. I am thinking of the lifestyle that the quarter permitted. Flash in the pans and their memories aren’t interesting.

In the case of the one and only Ivan, I think as you do that he can get in touch “when he feels it’s time.” This is what I got him to say over a year ago. Unfortunately, it was the pitiful Gaëtan, now grown fat and bald, who has since made numerous and fruitless attempts to speak to us (he must have unsatisfied artistic ambitions). The last

6. “Louis Portugais, Capircorn, is primarily a filmmaker ...” biographical note written by Straram.

time I met Ivan, around the summer of 55, we spoke, cordially, of past misunderstandings—which he attributed to real psychological troubles, and to the problems that he had encountered in his relationship with Marie-Hélène. But he seemed downcast, and changed. As we no longer seemed to have any apparent concerns in common, and as we found him sadly surrounded by deadbeats of the Conord⁷-Mension⁸ sort, prolonging this type of contact was not desirable.

Perhaps if he received this issue of the *Cahier*, the development of the understanding between us could incite Ivan to recover a dimension of things that he seems to have deserted a long time ago? We'll see.

What do you think of the *Préliminaires*⁹ platform, etc. established by Canjuers¹⁰ and I which is at the moment a basis for discussion between the SI and certain Marxist minorities within the workers' movement?

Are you thinking of coming back soon, if not to France, to Europe?

What became of *The Bottles Go Down* and *Thymus*?¹¹ Perhaps time has made certain publishers more open to such novels.

I hope that we can advance this dialogue quickly. And even better, by meeting.

We will use citations from the *Cahier* in the next issue of *IS*.—If you want, write an article directly for the issue.

I think that the copies of the *Cahier* have now arrived at the addresses that I sent you? It's rather urgent. I'm still expecting some more in Paris. Have you received everything that I said I sent the last time that I wrote you? Customs is persecuting us.

Michèle sends you her regards. As I do,

Guy

7. André-Frank Conord, member of the Lettrist International, editor of *Potlatch* (n° 1 to 8) until his exclusion on August 29, 1954, for "neobuddhism, evangelism, spiritualism."

8. Jean-Michel Mension, member of the Lettrist International. Reason for his expulsion in 1953: "Simply decorative."

9. P. Canjuers and G. Debord, "Preliminaries for a Definition of the Unified Revolutionary Program," 20 July 1960.

10. P. Canjuers is the pseudonym of Daniel Blanchard, a member of Socialisme ou Barbarie.

11. Two novels by Patrick Straram.

To Zimmer

Paris, 29 August 60

Dear Hans-Peter,

We should arrive in London *Saturday September 24th*.
The conference meetings will go on through September
25, 26, 27, and 28.

I still don't know the address where we should meet
up. But if the address hasn't been finalized before you
leave, the rallying point where we can contact each other
is: The Institute of Contemporary Arts, 17–18 Dover
Street, London, W 1.

Telephone: GRO 61 86.

The Radama group¹ question can be discussed at the
conference, if the group is represented.

Sincerely,

Guy

1. A group of German artists,
cf. *IS* no° 5, p. 11.

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A special mention for Gérard Berréby who, with our gratification in mind, shelved a well-advanced project that meant a lot to him.

Naturally, without forgetting Michèle Bernstein, for private reasons that are common knowledge.

Guy Debord

Introduction by McKenzie Wark

Translated by Stuart Kendall and John McHale



At that charming party at the end of the conference, Madame Van de Loo came over to joke with me that she was surprised to hear talk of practical actions in my regard, as she had imagined me more of a theoretician. She was greatly surprised when I told her, sincerely, that “nothing has ever interested me beyond a certain practice of life.” (It is precisely this that kept me from being an artist, in the current sense of the word and, I hope, a theoretician of aesthetics!)

This volume traces the dynamic first years of the Situationist International movement—a cultural avant-garde that continues to inspire new generations of artists, theorists, and writers more than half a century later. Debord's letters—published here for the first time in English—provide a fascinating insider's view of just how this seemingly disorganized group drifting around a newly consumerized Paris became one of the most defining cultural movements of the twentieth century. Circumstances, personalities, and ambitions all come into play as the group develops its strategy of anarchic, conceptual, but highly political “intervention.”

Brilliantly conceived, this collection of letters offers the best available introduction to the Situationist International movement by detailing, through original documents, how the group formed and defined its cultural mission: to bring about, “by any means possible, even artistic,” a complete transformation of personal life within the Society of the Spectacle.

Writer, filmmaker, and cultural revolutionary, Guy Debord (1931–1994) was a founding member of the Lettrist International and Situationist International groups. His films and books, including *Society of the Spectacle* (1967), were major catalysts for philosophical and political changes in the twentieth century, and helped trigger the May 1968 rebellion in France.

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