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All these texts originally appeared in French in Internationale Situationniste, B.P.307-03, Paris, France.

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APPENDIX

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THESES ON THE COMMUNE

1

"The traditional revolutionary workers' movement must be re-examined without any illusions and, first and foremost, without any illusions as to its various political and pseudo-theoretical heirs, for all they have inherited is its failure. What seem to be the achievements of this movement (reformism or the installation of a state bureaucracy) are its fundamental failures, while what seem to be its failures (the Commune or the Asturias revolt of 1934) are its greatest achievements, for us and for the future." (Internationale Situationniste No. 7)

2

The Commune was the biggest festival of the nineteenth century. Underlying all the events of that spring of 1871 one can see the insurgents' feeling that they had become the masters of their own history, not on the level of the politics of "government", but on the level of their everyday life. (Consider, for example, the games everybody played with their weapons; they were, in fact, playing with Power.) It is also in this sense that Marx should be understood when he says that "the most important social measure of the Commune was its own existence in acts".

3

The remark by Engels and Marx: "take a look at the Paris Commune. It was the dictatorship of the proletariat", should be taken seriously, in order to reveal what the dictatorship of the proletariat as a political regime is not (the various forms of dictatorship over the proletariat, in the name of the proletariat).

4

It is not difficult to make perfectly justified criticisms of the incoherence and obvious lack of a machine in the Commune. As the problem of political machinery seems far more complex to us today than the would-be heirs of the bolshevik-type machinery claim it to be, it is high time we examine the Commune not just as a superseded example of revolutionary primitivism, all the mistakes of which have long been overcome, but as a positive experiment whose whole truth has never been either rediscovered or accomplished to this day.

5

The Commune had no leaders. And this at a time when the idea of the necessity of leaders held undisputed sway over the proletarian movement. This is the first reason for its paradoxical successes and failures. The official organizers of the Commune were incompetent (if measured up against Marx, Lenin or even Blanqui). But on the other hand, the various "irresponsible" acts of this moment are precisely what should be claimed for the continuation of the revolutionary movement of our own time. This is so, even if the circum-

stances forced all of those acts to remain destructive. (The most famous example being the rebel who, when a suspected bourgeois insisted that he had never had anything to do with politics, replied "That's precisely why I'm going to kill you.")

6

The vital importance of the general arming of the masses was manifest, practically and symbolically, from the beginning to the end of the movement. By and large the right to impose popular will by force was not surrendered and left to any specialized detachments. The exemplary value of this autonomy of armed groups had its counterpart in their lack of co-ordination: at no point of the struggle against Versailles, on the offensive or the defensive, did the forces of the people attain real military effectiveness. It should, however, be born in mind that the Spanish Revolution was lost - as in the last analysis was the war itself - in the name of a similar transformation into a "republican army". The contradiction between autonomy and co-ordination would seem to be determined very largely by the point reached by the technology of that period.

7

The Commune represents the only realization of a revolutionary urbanism to date - attacking, on the spot, the petrified signs of the dominant organization of life, understanding social space in political terms, when they refused, for example, to accept the innocence of a single monument. Anyone who reduces this to some "lumpen-proletarian nihilism", some "irresponsibility of petrol-bombers", should be forced to state what, on the contrary, he believes to be of positive value in contemporary society and worth conserving (it will turn out to be almost everything...). "The entire space is already occupied by the enemy... Authentic urbanism will appear at the moment when the absence of this occupation is created in certain zones. What we call construction of situations starts there. It can be clarified by the concept of the positive hole coined by modern physics." (Unitary Urbanism out of I.S. 6)

8

The Paris Commune succumbed less to the force of arms than to the force of habit. The most scandalous practical example was the refusal to use artillery to seize the French National Bank when money was in such desperate need. Throughout the whole of the Commune, the Bank remained an enclave of Versailles in Paris, defended by no more than a few rifles and the myth of property and theft. The other ideological habits proved in every respect equally disastrous (the resurrection of Jacobinism, the defeatist strategy of barricades in memory of '48 and so on.)

9

The Commune shows how those who defend the old world always benefit, at one point or another, from the complicity of the revolutionaries; and, above all, from those who think out the revolution. This occurs at the point where the revolutionaries think like those guardians of the old world. In this way, the old world retains some bases (ideology, language, morality, habits) in the deployment of its enemies, and uses them to reconquer the terrain it lost. (Only the thought-in-action natural to the revolutionary proletariat escapes it irrevocably: the Tax Bureau went up in flames). The "fifth column" exists, in fact, in the very mind of the revolutionaries.

10

The story of the arsonists who, during the last days of the Commune, went to destroy Notre-Dame, only to find themselves confronted by an armed battalion of Commune artists, is rich in meaning: it is a fine example of direct democracy; it shows further the kind of problems still raised in the perspective of the power of the workers' councils. Were these artists as such right to defend a cathedral in the name of eternal aesthetic values - and in the last analysis, in the name of museum culture - while at the same time other men wanted nothing but to express themselves, for the first time there and then; to make this destruction symbolize their absolute defiance in the face of a society which, in its moment of triumph, was about to consign their lives to silence and oblivion? The artist partisans of the Commune, acting as specialists, already found themselves in conflict with an "extremist" form of struggle against alienation. The Communards must be criticized for not having dared to answer the totalitarian terror of power with the total power of weapons. Everything indicates that those poets who, at that moment, actually expressed the Commune's inherent poetry were simply wiped out. The abortive nature of the commune as a whole let its tentative actions be turned into "atrocities" and made it easy to censor the memory of its real intentions. Saint Just's remark that "those who make but half a revolution dig naught but their own graves" helps also explain his own silence.

11

Theoreticians who, like the traditional novelists, try to study the history of this movement from a divine omniscient standpoint can very easily prove that, in purely objective terms, the Commune was condemned to failure and that it could never have been superseded. They forget that for those who really lived through it, the supersession was there already.

12

The audacity and imagination of the Commune can only be measured in terms of the prevailing political, intellectual and moral attitudes of its own time in terms of the cohesion of all the prevailing platitudes it blasted to pieces. In the same way, the inventiveness we can expect of a comparable explosion today can only be measured in terms of the cohesion of the prevailing platitudes from the right

or the "left", of our own time.

13

The social war, of which the Commune was one moment, is still being fought today (though its superficial conditions have changed considerably). As to the task of "making the unconscious tendencies of the Commune conscious" (Engels), the last word is still to be said.

14

For almost twenty years in France, the Christians of the left and the Stalinists, in memory of their national anti-German front, have agreed to emphasize the aspect of national disarray and offended patriotism appearing in the Commune, to explain that "the French people petitioned to be better governed" (in agreement with contemporary Stalinist "politics"), and were finally brought to despair by the default of the country-less right wing of the bourgeoisie. In order to regurgitate this holy water it would suffice to study the role played by foreigners who came to fight for the Commune. The Commune, in fact, was above all the inevitable battle, climax of twenty three years of struggle in Europe by "our party" as Marx said.

18 March 1962

Debord, Kotanyi and Vaneigem.

This text was first issued by Internationale Situationniste.

B. P. 307 - 03, Paris.

"A revolutionary publication does not treat its readers as passive consumers, but as potential revolutionaries who appropriate and supercede in practice the critique it makes. Revolutionary practice is not only the critique of the old world in its open and obvious manifestations, but also the practical and explicit critique of all that claims to represent the real revolutionary movement. Autonomous revolutionary practice on the part of every individual demands a critical attitude towards the activities and the texts that any other individual or group produces. Such a critical attitude is the proof of real autonomy."

From the editorial in the first issue of
OMPHALOS - Ramifications of Situationist
Theory. November 1971.

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THE DECLINE & THE FALL of the "SPECTACULAR" COMMODITY-
ECONOMY

By Guy Debord.

From the 13th to the 16th of August, 1965, the blacks of Los Angeles revolted. An incident involving traffic police and pedestrians developed into two days of spontaneous riots. The forces of order, despite repeated reinforcement, were unable to gain control of the streets. By the third day, the negroes had armed themselves by pillaging such arms shops as were accessible, and were so enabled to open fire on police helicopters. Thousands of soldiers - the whole military weight of an infantry division, supported by tanks - had to be thrown into the struggle before the Watts area could be surrounded, after which it took several days and much street fighting for it to be brought under control. The rioters didn't hesitate to plunder and burn the shops of the area. The official figures testify to 32 dead, including 27 negroes, plus 800 wounded and 3,000 arrested.

Reactions on all sides were invested with clarity: the revolutionary act always discloses the reality of existing problems, lending an unaccustomed and unconscious truth to the various postures of its opponents. Police Chief William Parker, for example, refused all mediation proposed by the main Negro organisations, asserting correctly that the rioters had no leader. Evidently, as the blacks were without a leader, this was the moment of truth for both parties. What did Roy Wilkins, general secretary of the NAACP, want at that moment? He declared that the rioters should be put down "with all the force necessary". And the Cardinal of Los Angeles, McIntyre, who protested loudly, had not protested against the violence of the repression, which one would have supposed the subtle thing to do, at the moment of the aggiornamento of the Roman church; instead, he protested in the most urgent tones about "a premeditated revolt against the rights of one's neighbour; respect for the law and maintenance of order", calling upon catholics to oppose the plundering and the apparently unjustified violence. All the theorists and "spokesmen" of the international Left (or, rather of its nothingness) deplored the irresponsibility and disorder, the pillaging and above all the fact that arms and alcohol were the first targets for plunder; finally, that 2,000 fires had been started by the Watts gasoline throwers to light up their battle and their ball. But who was there to defend the rioters of Los Angeles in the terms they deserve? Well, we shall. Let us leave the economists to grieve over the 27 million dollars lost, and the town planners over one of their most beautiful supermarkets gone up in smoke, and McIntyre over his slain Deputy Sheriff; let the sociologists weep over the absurdity and the intoxication of this rebellion. The job of a revolutionary journal is not only to justify the Los Angeles insurgents, but to help uncover their just reasons: to explain theoretically the truth for which such practical action expresses the search.

In Algiers in July, 1965, following Boumedienne's coup d'etat, the Situationists published an Address to the Algerians and to revo-

lutionaries all over the world, which interpreted conditions in Algeria and in the rest of the world as a whole; among their examples, they evoked the American negroes, who if they could "affirm themselves significantly" would unmask the contradictions of the most advanced of capitalist systems. Five weeks later, this significance found an expression on the street. Theoretical criticism of modern society, in its advanced forms, and criticism in actions of the same society, co-exist at this moment: still separated but both advancing towards the same reality, both talking of the same thing. These two critiques are mutually explanatory, each being incomprehensible without the other. Our theory of "survival" and the "spectacle" is illuminated and verified by these actions so unintelligible to the American false consciousness. One day these actions will in turn be illuminated by this theory.

Up to this time the Negro "Civil Rights" demonstrations had been kept by their leaders within the limits of a legal system which overlooked the most appalling violence on the part of the police and the racials: in Alabama the previous March for instance, at the time of the Montgomery March, and as if this scandal was not sufficient, a discreet agreement between the Federal government, Governor Wallace and Pastor King had led the Selma Marchers of the 10th of March to stand back at the first request, in dignity and prayer. Thus the confrontation expected by the crowd had been reduced to the charade of a merely potential confrontation. In that moment, Non-Violence reached the pitiful limit of its courage: first you expose yourself to the enemies' blows, then force your moral grandeur to the point of sparing him the trouble of using more force. But the basic fact is that the civil rights movement, by remaining within the law, only posed legal problems. It is logical to make an appeal to the law legally. What is not logical is to appeal legally against a patent illegality as if this contradiction would disappear if pointed out. For it is clear that the superficial and outrageously visible illegality - from which the blacks still suffer in many American states - has its roots in a socio-economic contradiction which existing laws simply cannot touch, and which no future juridical law will be able to get rid of in face of more basic cultural laws of the society: and it is against these that the negroes are at last daring to raise their voices and asking the right to live. In reality, the American negro wants the total subversion of that Society - or nothing.

The problem of this necessity for subversion arises of its own accord the moment the blacks start using subversive means: the change-over to such methods happens on the level of their daily life, appearing at one and the same time as the most accidental and the most objectively justified development. This issue is no longer the status of the American negro, but the status of America, even if this happens to find its first expression among the negroes. This was not a racial conflict: the rioters left certain whites that were in their path alone, attacking only the white policemen: similarly, black solidarity did not extend to black shopkeepers, not even to black car-drivers.

Even Luther King, in Paris last October, had to admit that the limits of his competence had been overshot: "They were not race riots," he said, "but one class."

The Los Angeles rebellion was a rebellion against commodities and of worker consumers hierarchically subordinated to commodity values. The negroes of Los Angeles - like the young delinquents of all advanced countries, but more radically because at the level of a class globally deprived of a future, a sector of the proletariat unable to believe in significant chance of integration and promotion - take modern capitalist propaganda literally, with its display of affluence. They want to possess immediately all the objects shown and made abstractly accessible: they want to make use of them. That is why they reject the values of exchange, the commodity-reality which is its mold, its purpose and its final goal, which has pre-selected everything. Through theft and gift they retrieve a use which at once gives the lie to the oppressive rationality of commodities, disclosing their relations and invention to be arbitrary and unnecessary. The plunder of the Watts sector was the most simple possible realization of the hybrid principle: "To each according to his (false) needs" - needs determined and produced by the economic system, which the act of pillaging rejects.

But the fact that the vaunting of abundance is taken at its face value and discovered in the immediate instead of being eternally pursued in the course of alienated labour and in the face of increasing but unmet social needs - this fact means that real needs are expressed in carnival, playful affirmation and the potlatch of destruction. The man who destroys commodities shows his human superiority over commodities. He frees himself from the arbitrary forms which cloak his real needs. The flames of Watts consumed the system of consumption! The theft of large refrigerators by people with no electricity, or with their electricity cut off, gives the best possible metaphor for the lie of affluence transformed into a truth in play. Once it is no longer bought, the commodity lies open to criticism and modification, and this under whichever of its forms it may appear. Only so long as it is paid for with money, as a status symbol of survival, can it be worshipped fetishistically. Pillage is the natural response to the affluent society: the affluence, however, is by no means natural or human - it is simply abundance of goods. Pillage, moreover, which instantly destroys commodities as such, discloses the ultima ratio of commodities, namely, the army, the police and the other specialized detachments which have the monopoly of armed force within the State. What is a policeman? He is the active servant of commodities, the man in complete submission to commodities, whose job is to insure that a given product of human labour remains a commodity with the magical property of having to be paid for instead of becoming a mere refrigerator or rifle - a mute, passive insensible thing, itself in submission to the first comer to make use of it. Over and above the indignity of depending on commodities. The Watts youth, having no future in market terms, grasped another quality of the present, and the truth of that present

was so irresistible that it drew on the whole population, women, children, and even sociologists who happened to find themselves on the scene. A young negro sociologist of the district, Bobbi Hollon, had this to say to the Herald Tribune in October: "Before, people were ashamed to say they came from Watts. They'd mumble it. Now, they say it with pride. Boys who always went around with their shirts open to the waist, and who'd have cut you into strips in half a second, used to apply here every morning. They organized the distribution of food. Of course it's no good pretending the food wasn't plundered.... All that Christian blah has been used too long against the negroes. These people could plunder for ten years and they wouldn't get back half the money that has been stolen from them in all these years.... Myself, I'm just a little black girl." Bobbi Hollon, who has sworn never to wash from her sandals the blood that splashed them during the rioting, adds: "All the world looks to Watts now."

How do men make history, starting from the conditions pre-established to persuade them not to take a hand in it? The Los Angeles negroes are better paid than any others in the U.S., but it is also here that they are furthest behind that high point of affluence which is California. Hollywood, the pole of the worldwide spectacle, is in their immediate vicinity. They are promised that, with patience, they will join in America's prosperity, but they realize that this prosperity is not a static sphere but rather a ladder without end. The higher they climb, the further they get from the top, because they don't have a fair start, because they are less qualified and thus more numerous among the unemployed, and finally because the hierarchy which crushes them is not one based simply on buying power as a pure economic fact: an essential inferiority is imposed on them in every area of daily life by the customs and prejudices of a society in which all human power is based on buying power. So long as the human riches of the American negro are despised and treated as criminal, monetary riches will never make him acceptable to the alienated society of America: individual wealth may make him a rich negro but the negroes as a whole must represent poverty in a society of hierarchised wealth. Every witness noted this cry which proclaims the fundamental meaning of the rising: "This is the Black Revolution, and we want the world to know it!" Freedom now! is the password of all historical revolutions, but here for the first time it is not poverty but material abundance which must be controlled according to new laws. The control of abundance is not just changing the way it is shared out, but redefining its every orientation, superficial and profound alike. This is the first skirmish of an enormous struggle, infinite in its implications.

The blacks are not isolated in their struggle because a new proletarian consciousness- the consciousness of not being the master of one's activity, of one's life, in the slightest degree-- is taking form in America among strata whose refusal of modern capitalism resembles that of the negroes. Indeed the first phase of the negro struggle has been the signal to a movement of opposition which is spreading. In December, 1964 the students of Berkeley, frustrated in their participation in the civil rights movement,

ended up by calling a strike to oppose the system of California's "multiversity", and by extension the social system of the U.S., in which they are allotted such a passive role. Immediately, drinking and drug orgies were uncovered among the students-- the same supposed activities for which the negroes have long been castigated. This generation of students has since invented a new form of struggle against the dominant spectacle, the teach-in, a form taken up by the Edinburgh students on October 20th apropos of the Rhodesian crisis. This clearly imperfect and primitive type of opposition represents the stage of discussion which refuses to be limited in time (academically), and in this its logical outcome is a progression to practical activity. Also in October, thousands of demonstrators appeared in the streets of Berkeley and New York, their cries echoing those of the Watts rioters: "Get out of our district and out of Vietnam!" The whites, becoming more radical, have stepped outside the law: "courses" are given on how to defraud the recruiting boards, draft cards are burned and the act televised. In the affluent society, disgust for affluence and for its price is finding expression. The spectacle is being spat on by advanced sector whose autonomous activity denies its values. The classical proletariat, to the extent to which it had been provisionally integrated into the capitalist system, had itself failed to integrate the negroes (several Los Angeles unions refused negroes until 1959) now, the negroes are the rallying point for all those who refuse the logic of integration into that system-- integration into capitalism being of course the ne plus ultra of all integration promised. And comfort will never be comfortable enough for those who seek what is not on the market-- or rather, that which the market eliminates. The level reached by the technology of the most privileged becomes an insult-- and one more easily expressed than that most basic insult, which is reification. The Los Angeles rebellion is the first in history able to justify itself by the argument that there was no air conditioning during a heatwave.

The American negro has his own particular spectacle, his press, magazines, colored film stars, and if the blacks realize this, if they spew out this spectacle for its phonyness, as an expression of their unworthiness, it is because they see it to be a minority spectacle-- nothing but the appendage of a general spectacle. They recognize that this parade of their consumption-to-be-desired is a colony of the white one, and thus they see through the lie of this total economico-cultural spectacle more quickly. By wanting to participate really and immediately in affluence-- and this is an official value of every American-- they demand the equalitarian realization of the American spectacle of everyday life: they demand that the half-heavenly, half-terrestrial values of this spectacle be put to the test. But it is the essence of the spectacle that it cannot be made real immediately or equally, and this, not even for the whites. (In fact, the function of the negro in terms of the spectacle is to serve as the perfect prod: in the race for riches, such underprivilege is an incitement to ambition.) In taking

the capitalist spectacle at its face value the negroes are already rejecting the spectacle itself. The spectacle is a drug for slaves. It is not supposed to be taken literally, but followed at a few paces' distance; if it were not for this albeit tiny distance, it would become total mystification. The fact is that in the U.S. today the whites are enslaved to commodities while the negroes negate them. The blacks ask for more than the whites-- that is the core of an insoluble problem, or rather one only soluble through the dissolution of the white social system. This is why those whites who want to escape their own servitude must needs rally to the negro cause, not in a solidarity based on color, obviously, but in a global rejection of commodities and, in the last analysis, of the State. The economic and social backwardness of the negroes allows them to see what the white consumer is, and their justified contempt for the white is nothing but contempt for any passive consumer. Whites who cast off their role have no chance unless they link their struggle more and more to the negro's struggle, uncovering his real and coherent reasons and supporting them until the end. If such an accord were to be ruptured at a radical point in the battle, the result would be the formation of a black nationalism and a confrontation between the two splinters exactly after the fashion of the prevailing system. A phase of mutual extermination is the other possible outcome of the present situation, once resignation is overcome.

The attempts to build a black nationalism, separatist and pro-africanas they are, are dreams giving no answer to the reality of oppression. The American negro has no fatherland. He is in his own country and he is alienated: so is the rest of the population, but the blacks differ insofar as they are aware of it. In this sense, they are not the most backward sector of their society, but the most advanced. They are the negation at work, "the bad aspect producing the movement which makes history by setting the struggle in motion". (Marx: The Poverty of Philosophy). Africa has nothing to do with it.

The American negroes are the product of modern industry, just as are electronics, advertizing or the cyclotron. And they carry within them its contradictions. These are the men whom the spectacle-paradise must integrate and repulse simultaneously, so that the antagonism between the spectacle and the real activity of men surrenders completely to their enunciations. The spectacle is universal in the same way as the commodities. But as the world of commodities is based in class conflict, commodities are themselves hierarchic. The necessity of commodities-- and hence of the spectacle whose job it is to inform about commodities-- to be at once universal and hierarchic leads to a universal hierarchization. But as this hierarchization must remain unavowed, it is expressed in the form of unacknowledgeable hierarchic value judgements, in a world of reasonless rationalization. It is this process which creates racialisms everywhere: the English Labour government has just restrained colored immigration, while the industrially advanced countries of Europe are once again becoming racialist as

they import their sub-proletariat from the Mediterranean area, so exerting a colonial exploitation within their borders. And if Russia continues to be antisemitic, it is because she is still a society of hierarchy and commodities, in which labor must be bought and sold as a commodity. Together, commodities and hierarchies are constantly renewing their alliance, which extends its influence by modifying its form: it is seen just as easily in the relations between trade-unionist and worker as between two car owners with artificially distinguished models. This is the original sin of commodity rationality, the sickness of bourgeois reason, whose legacy is bureaucracy. But the repulsive absurdity of certain hierarchies and the fact that the whole world strength of commodities is directed blindly and automatically towards their protection, leads us to see--the moment we engage on a negating praxis--that every hierarchy is absurd.

The rational world produced by the industrial revolution has rationally liberated individuals from their local and national limitations, and related them on a world scale: but denies reason by separating them once more, according to a hidden logic which finds its expression in mad ideas and grotesque value-systems. Man, estranged from his world, is everywhere surrounded by strangers. The barbarian is no longer at the ends of the earth, he is on the spot, made into a barbarian by this very same forced participation in hierarchized consumption. The humanism cloaking all this is opposed to man, and the negation of his activity and his desires; it is the humanism of commodities, expressing the benevolence of the parasite, merchandise, towards the men off whom it feeds. For those who reduce men to objects, objects seem to acquire human qualities, and manifestations of human activity appear as unconscious animal behavior. Thus the chief humanist of Los Angeles, William Parker, can say: "they started behaving like a bunch of monkeys in a zoo."

When the state of emergency was declared by the California authorities, the insurance companies recalled that they do not cover risks at that level: they guarantee nothing beyond survival. Overall, the American negroes can rest assured that, if they keep quiet, their survival is guaranteed; and capitalism has become sufficiently centralized and entrenched in the state to distribute "welfare" to the poorest. But simply because they are behind in the process of intensification of socially organized survival, the blacks present problems of life and what they demand is not to survive but to live. The blacks have nothing to insure of their own: they have to destroy all the forms of security and private insurance known up to now. They appear as what they are: the irreconcilable enemies--not of the vast majority of Americans--but of the alienated way of life of all modern society; the most advanced country industrially only shows us the road that will be everywhere followed unless the system is overthrown.

Certain black extremists, in showing why they could never accept less than a separate State, have advanced the argument that

American society, even if it someday concedes total civic and economic equality, will never get around to accepting mixed marriages. It is therefore this American society which must disappear, not only in America but everywhere in the world. The end of all racial prejudice (like the end of so many other prejudices such as sexual ones related to inhibitions) can only lie beyond "marriage" itself: that is, beyond the bourgeois family (which is questioned by the American negroes). This is the rule as much in Russia as in the United States, as a model of hierarchic relations and of the stability of an inherited power (be it money or socio-bureaucratic status). It is now often said that American youth, after thirty years of silence, is rising again as a force of opposition, and that the black revolt is their Spanish Civil War. This time, its "Lincoln Battalions" must understand the full significance of the struggle in which they engage, supporting it up to the end of its universal implications. The "excesses" of Los Angeles are no more a political error in the Black Revolt than the armed resistance of the P.O.U.M. in Barcelona, May 1937, was a betrayal of the anti-Franquist war. A rebellion against the spectacle is situated on the level of the totality, because-- even were it to appear only in a single district, Watts-- it is a protest by men against the inhuman life; because it begins at the level of the real single individual, and because community, from which the individual in revolt is separated is the true social nature of man, human nature: the positive transcendence of the spectacle.

December 1965.

SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL.

THE TOTALITY FOR KIDS
THE TOTALITY FOR KIDS
THE TOTALITY FOR KIDS
THE TOTALITY FOR KIDS

INTRODUCTION.

Almost everyone has always been excluded from LIFE and forced to devote the whole of their energy to SURVIVAL. Today, the WELFARE STATE imposes the elements of this survival in the form of technological comforts (car, frozen-foods, Welwyn Garden City, Shakespeare televised for the masses).

Moreover, the organisation controlling the material equipment of our everyday lives is such that what in itself would enable us to construct them richly, plunges us instead into a luxury of impoverishment, making alienation even more intolerable as each element of comfort appears to be a liberation and turns out to be a servitude. We are condemned to the slavery of working for freedom.

To be understood, this problem must be seen in the light of hierarchical power. Perhaps it isn't enough to say that hierarchical power has preserved humanity for thousands of years as alcohol preserves a foetus, by arresting either growth or decay. It should also be made clear that hierarchical power represents the most highly evolved form of privative appropriation, and historically its alpha and omega. Privative appropriation itself can be defined as appropriation of things by means of appropriation of people, the struggle against natural alienation engendering social alienation.

Privative appropriation entails an ORGANISATION OF APPEARANCES by which its radical contradictions can be dissimulated. The executives must see themselves as degraded reflections of the master, thus strengthening, through the looking-glass of an illusory liberty, all that produces their submission and their passivity. The master must be identified with the mythical and perfect servant of a god or a transcendence, whose substance is no more than a sacred and abstract representation of the TOTALITY of people and things over which the master exercises a power which can only become even stronger as everyone accepts the purity of his renunciation. To the real sacrifice of the worker corresponds the mythical sacrifice of the organiser; each negates himself in the other, the strange becomes familiar and the familiar strange, each is realised in an inverted perspective. From this common alienation a harmony is born, a negative harmony whose fundamental unity lies in the notion of sacrifice. This objective (and perverted) harmony is sustained by myth; this term having been used to characterise the organisation of appearances in unitary societies, that is to say, in societies where power over slaves, over a tribe, or over serfs, is officially consecrated by divine authority, where the sacred

sacred allows power to seize the totality.

The harmony based initially on the "GIFT of oneself" contains a relationship which was to develop, become autonomous and destroy it. This relationship is based on partial EXCHANGE (merchandise, money, product, labour force...) the exchange of a part of oneself on which the bourgeois conception of liberty is based. It arises as commerce and technology become preponderant within agrarian-type economies.

When the bourgeoisie seized power they destroyed its unity. Sacred private appropriation became laicised in capitalistic mechanisms. The totality was freed from its seizure by power and became concrete and immediate once more. The era of fragmentation has been a succession of attempts to recapture an inaccessible unity, to shelter power behind a substitute for the sacred.

A revolutionary moment is when "all that really presents" finds its immediate REPRESENTATION. For the rest of the time, hierarchical power, always more distant from its magical and mystical regalia, endeavours to make everyone forget that the totality (no more than reality!) exposes its imposture.

1

Bureaucratic capitalism has found its legitimate justification in Marx. We are not concerned here with assessing the role of orthodox marxism in reinforcing the structures of neocapitalism, whose present reorganisation testifies to the greatest respect for soviet totalitarianism. The point is to stress the extent to which Marx's most profound analyses of alienation have been vulgarised in the most commonplace facts, which, robbed of their magic and embodied in every gesture, have become the sole substance, day after day, of the lives of a growing number of people. Bureaucratic capitalism contains the self-evident truth of alienation; it has brought it home to everybody far more successfully than Marx could ever have hoped to do. It has become commonplace as the disappearance of material poverty has merely revealed the mediocrity of existence itself. The extent of our impoverishment may have been reduced in terms of mere material survival, but it has become more profound in terms of our way of life - at least one widespread feeling that dissociates Marx from all the interpretations imposed by a degenerate Bolshevism. The "theory" of peaceful coexistence has spelt it out to those who were still confused: gangsters can get on very well with one another, despite their spectacular divergences.

2

"any act," writes Mircea Eliade, "can become a religious act. Human existence is realised simultaneously on two parallel planes, on that of temporality, of becoming, of illusion, and on that of eternity, of substance, of reality." During the nineteenth century the brutal divorce of

the two planes proved that power would have been more effective if reality had been maintained in a mist of divine transcendence. To give reformism its due, it has managed, where Bonaparte failed, to dissolve becoming in eternity and reality in illusion; the union may not be as satisfactory as the sacrament of marriage, but it lasts, and that's the most the managers of social peace and coexistence can ask of it. And it also leads us to define ourselves - caught in the illusory but inescapable perspective of duration - as the end of abstract temporality, as the end of the reified time of our acts. Does it have to be spelt out: to define ourselves at the positive pole of alienation as the end of mankind's term of social alienation?

3

The socialisation of primitive human groups reveals the will to struggle more effectively against the mysterious and terrifying forces of nature. But to struggle in the natural environment, at once against and with it, to submit to the most inhuman of its laws in order to seize an extra chance of survival - to do this could only engender a more evolved form of aggressive defence, a more complex and less primitive attitude, manifesting on a more evolved level the contradictions that the forces of nature, which could be influenced while they could not be controlled, never ceased to impose. As it became social, the struggle against the blind domination of nature succeeded in the measure that it gradually assimilated primitive and natural alienation, but in another form. Alienation became social in the struggle against natural alienation. Is it by chance that a technical civilisation has developed to the point where social alienation has been revealed by its conflict with the last areas of natural resistance that technical power hadn't managed (and for good reasons) to destroy. Today, the technocrats propose we put an end to primitive alienation: overcome with brotherly love, they exhort us to perfect the technical means which "in themselves" would enable us to conquer death, suffering, sickness and boredom. But the miracle wouldn't be to get rid of death, the miracle would be to get rid of suicide and the desire to be dead. There are ways of abolishing the death penalty which make one miss it. Until now the specific application of technics to society, while reducing quantitatively the number of occasions of suffering and death has allowed death itself to eat like a cancer into the heart of life.

4

The prehistoric period of food gathering was succeeded by the period of hunting, during which the clans formed and struggled to ensure their survival. Hunting-grounds and reserves were established and used for the benefit of the group as a whole. Strangers were banned absolutely as the welfare of the whole clan depended on the observation of its boundaries. So that the liberty won by settling more comfortably in the natural environment, by more effective protection against its hazards, itself engendered its own negation outside the frontiers laid down by the clan and forced the group to moderate its customary activities by organising its relations with excluded and menacing tribes. From the moment it appeared,

economic survival on a social basis engendered boundaries, restrictions and conflicting rights. It should never be forgotten that until now both our own nature and the nature of history have been produced by the development of privative appropriation: by a class, a group, a caste or an individual seizing control of a collective power of socio-economic survival, whose form is always complex, from the ownership of land, of territory, of a factory, of capital, to the "pure" exercise of power over men (hierarchy). Even beyond the struggle against regimes whose vision of paradise is the cybernetic welfare state, lies the necessity of a still vaster struggle against a fundamental and, initially, natural condition, in the development of which capitalism plays only an episodic role, and which will only disappear with the last traces of hierarchical power; or else, of course, the "marcassins de l'humanité".

5

To be a proprietor is to arrogate a good from whose enjoyment one excludes other people; at the same time it is to grant everyone the potential right of possession. By excluding them from the de facto right of ownership, the proprietor makes those he excludes themselves a part of his property (annexing the non-owners absolutely, annexing the other proprietors relatively): without whom, moreover, he is nothing. Those without property have no choice in the matter. The proprietor appropriates and alienates them as the producers of his own power, while the necessity of physical survival forces them, despite themselves, to collaborate in their own alienation, to produce it. They survive as those who cannot live. Excluded, they participate in possession through the mediation of the proprietor, a mystical participation, since originally all clan and social relationships evolved on a mystical basis, slowly replacing the principle of involuntary cohesion in terms of which each member functions as a part of the group as a whole ("organic interdependence"). Their activity within the structure of privative appropriation guarantees their survival. They consolidate a right to property from which they are excluded and, owing to this ambiguity, each of them sees himself as participating in property, as a living fragment of the right to possess, although the development of any such belief can only reveal his own exclusion and possession. (Chronic cases of this alienation: the faithful slave, the cop, the bodyguard, the centurion, who through a sort of union with their own death, confer on death a power equal to the forces of life, identifying in a destructive energy the negative and the positive poles of alienation, the absolutely obedient slave and the absolute master.) It is of vital importance to the exploiter that this appearance is maintained and made more sophisticated: not because he is especially machiavellian, but simply because he wants to stay alive. The organisation of appearances is dependent on the survival of the proprietor, a survival dependent in its turn on the survival of his privileges. The organisation of appearances takes in the physical survival of the dispossessed, it creates the possibility of staying alive while one is exploited and excluded from human life. Thus, initially, privative appropriation and domination are imposed and experienced as a positive right, but in the form of a negative universality. Valid for everyone, justified in everyone's eyes by divine

law or natural reason, the right of private appropriation is objectified in general illusion, in a universal transcendence, in an essential law under which everyone, individually, manages to tolerate the limits assigned to his own right to live, and to the conditions of life in general.

6

The function of alienation as the condition of survival should be understood in this social context. The labour of the dispossessed obeys the same contradictions as the right of private appropriation. It transforms them into the possessed, into those who produce their own appropriation and are responsible for their own exclusion, but it is the only chance of survival for slaves, for serfs, for workers - so much so that the activity which allows existence to continue by emptying it of all content finally, through a reversal of perspective that is both comprehensible and sinister, takes on a positive sense. Not only has work been valorised (in the form of sacrifice under the ancien regime, in its brutalising aspects in bourgeois ideology and in the so-called popular democracies), but moreover, from a very early stage, to work for a master, to alienate oneself with the best will in the world, became the honourable - and virtually indisputable - price of survival. The satisfaction of basic needs remains the best safeguard of alienation; it is best dissimulated on the grounds of its "necessity". Alienation multiplies needs because it can satisfy none; today, lack of satisfaction is measured in numbers of cars, fridges, t.v.'s: the alienating objects have lost the ruse and the mystery of transcendence, they are there in their concrete poverty. To be rich today is to possess the greatest number of impoverished objects.

So far, surviving has stopped us living. This is why the impossibility of survival is so important. That it is impossible can only become more and more obvious as comfort and overabundance of the elements of survival reduce life to a single choice: suicide or revolution.

7

The sacred even presides over the struggle against alienation. As soon as the violence of the relationship between exploiter and exploited is no longer concealed by the panoply of mysticism, the struggle against alienation is suddenly revealed as a ruthless hand-to-hand fight with naked power, discovered in its brutal strength and its weakness, a vulnerable giant whose slightest wound confers on the aggressor the notoriety of an Erostratus; since power survives, the event remains ambiguous. Destruction - sublime moment when the complexity of the world becomes tangible, transparent, within everyone's grasp, revolts for which there can be no expiation - those of the slaves, of the Jacques, of the iconoclasts, of the Enrages, of the Federes, of Kronstadt, of Asturias, and - a promise of things to come - the hooligans of Stockholm and the wildcat strikes... Only the destruction of all hierarchical power will allow us to forget these. We intend to make sure that it does.

The deterioration of mythic structures and their slowness to regenerate themselves have not only made possible the prise de conscience and the

critical penetration of insurrection. They are also responsible for the fact that once the "excesses" of revolution are past the struggle against alienation is grasped on a theoretical plane, as an extension of the demystification preceding revolt. It is then that revolt on its purest and most authentic features is re-examined and disavowed by the "we didn't really mean to do that" of theoreticians whose job is to explain an insurrection to those who created it, to those who intend to demystify by acts, not just by words.

All acts opposing power today call for analysis and tactical development. Much can be expected of:

(a) The new proletariat, discovering its penury amidst abundant consumer goods (viz. the development of the working-class struggles beginning in England; equally, the attitudes of rebel youth in all the highly industrialised countries).

(b) Countries that have had enough of their partial and tricked up revolutions and are consigning past and present theoreticians to the museum (viz. the role of the intelligentsia in the East.)

(c) The underdeveloped nations, whose mistrust of the technical myths has been kept alive by the cops and mercenaries of colonisation, the last and over-zealous militants of a transcendence against which they are the best possible vaccination.

(d) The vigour of the S.I. ("Our ideas are in everyone's mind") capable of forestalling remote-controlled revolts, "crystal nights", and sheepish resistance.

8

Private appropriation is bound to the dialectic of particular and general. In the realm of the mystic, where the contradictions of slave and feudal systems dissolve, the dispossessed excluded in particular from the right of possession endeavours to assure his survival through his labour: the more he identifies with the interests of the master the more successful he will be. He only knows the other dispossessed through their common predicament: the compulsory surrender of labour force (Christianity recommended voluntary surrender: once a slave offered his labour "of his own accord" he was no longer a slave), the search for the optimum conditions of survival and mystical identification. Struggle, though born of a universal will to survive, is engaged on the level of appearances where it brings into play identification with the desires of the master, and introduces a certain individual rivalry reflecting the rivalry of the masters among themselves. Competition will develop on this plane for as long as mystical opacity continues to envelop the structure of exploitation, and for as long as the conditions producing this confusion continue to exist; or, alternatively, for as long as the state of slavery determines consciousness of the state of reality. (By objective consciousness we still understand consciousness that is conscious of being an object.) The proprietor, for his part, is forced to acknowledge a right from which he alone is not excluded, but which, however, is apprehended on the level of appearances as a right valid for each of the excluded taken individually. His prerogatives depend on this belief, and on it a strength which is essential

if he is to hold his own amongst the other proprietors; it is his strength. If, in his turn, he seems to renounce the exclusive appropriation of everything and everybody, if he seems to be less a master than a servant - a servant of the public good, a defender of the faith - then his strength is crowned with glory and renown, and to his other privileges he adds that of denying on the level of appearances - the only level of reference of unilateral communication - the very idea of personal appropriation. He denies that anyone has this right, he repudiates the other proprietors. In the feudal perspective, the proprietor is not integrated in appearances on the same level as the dispossessed, slaves, soldiers, functionaries, servants, etc. The lives of the latter are so squalid that the majority can only live as a caricature of the Master (the feudal, the prince, the major-domo, the task-master, the high priest, God, Satan...). Yet the master himself is also forced to play the part of a caricature. He can do so without especial effort: his imitation of total life is already caricatural, completely isolated as he is among those who can only survive. He is already one of our own kind, with the added grandeur of a past epoch, with its strength and its nostalgia. He too was waiting, just as we are waiting today, longing for the adventure where he could become one with himself, where he could find himself once more on the pathway to his total prediction. Could the master, at the moment he alienates the others, suddenly realise that they are excluded and possessed? If he did, he would realise he was only an exploiter, a purely negative being. This is neither likely nor desirable. By ruling the greatest possible number of subjects doesn't he allow them to stay alive, doesn't he offer them their only hope? (Whatever would happen to the workers if someone didn't employ them? as Victorian "thinkers" liked to ask). In fact, what the proprietor does is to exclude himself officially from all claim to private appropriation. To the sacrifice of the dispossessed, who through his work exchanges his real life for an apparent one (for the life that stops him killing himself and allows the master to kill him instead), the proprietor replies by appearing to sacrifice his nature as proprietor and exploiter; he excludes himself mythically, he puts himself at the service of everyone and of myth (at the service, for example, of God and his people). With an additional gesture, with an act whose gratuity bathes him in another worldly radiance, he gives renunciation its pure form of mythic reality: renouncing common life, he is the poor man amidst illusory wealth, he who sacrifices himself for everyone while other people only sacrifice themselves for their own sake, for the sake of their survival. He turns his predicament into glory. The more powerful he is, the more spectacular his sacrifice. He becomes the living reference point of the whole of illusory life, the highest point which can be reached in the scale of mythic values. Withdrawn "voluntarily" from more common mortals he is drawn towards the world of the gods, and, on the level of appearances (the only general level of reference) it is faith in his participation in the divinity which consecrates his position in the hierarchy of the other proprietors. In the organisation of transcendence, the feudal - and, through osmosis, the proprietors of power or of material production, in varying degrees - is led to play the principal role, the role he really does play in the economic organisation of the survival of the group. So the existence of the group is bound

on every level to the existence of the proprietors as such, to those who, owning everything since they own everybody, also force everyone to renounce their lives on the pretext of their own renunciation, absolute and divine. (From the god Prometheus punished by the gods to the god Christ punished by men, the sacrifice of the proprietor becomes vulgarised, loses its sacred aura, is humanised.) Myth unites proprietor and dispossessed. It envelopes them in a common form where the necessity of survival, as an animal or as a privileged being, forces them to live on the level of appearances and under the inverted sign of real life, which is that of everyday praxis. We are still there, waiting to live before or after a mystique against which our every gesture protests in its very submission.

9

Myth, the unitary absolute in which the contradictions of the world find an illusory resolution, the harmonious-constantly-harmonised vision that reflects and strengthens order - this is the sphere of the sacred, the extra-human zone where, among so many other wonderful revelations, the revelation of privative appropriation is not to be found. Nietzsche was very much to the point when he wrote: "All becoming is a criminal emancipation from eternal being, and its price is death." The bourgeoisie claimed to replace the pure Being of feudalism with Becoming, while in fact all it did was to deconsecrate being and to reconsecrate Becoming to its own advantage; it elevated its own becoming to the status of Being, no longer that of absolute property, but that of relative appropriation: a petty democratic and mechanical becoming, with its notion of progress, of merit and of casual succession. The life of the proprietor hides him from himself; bound to myth by a pact of life or death, he can only become conscious of his own positive and exclusive enjoyment of any good through the lived appearance of his own exclusion - and isn't it through this mythic exclusion that the dispossessed will discover the reality of their own exclusion? He accepts the responsibility of a group he assumes the proportions of a god. He submits himself to its benediction and its punishment, he swathes himself in his austerity and wastes away. The master is the model of the gods and the heroes, the face of the proprietor is the true face of Prometheus and of Christ - the face of all those whose spectacular self-sacrifice has made it possible for "the vast majority of men" to continue to sacrifice themselves to an extreme minority, to their masters. (Analysis of the proprietor's sacrifice should be worked out more subtly: isn't the case of Christ really the sacrifice of the proprietor's son? If the proprietor can only seem to sacrifice himself, on the level of appearances, then Christ stands for the real immolation of his son when the circumstances leave no other alternative. As a son he is only a little proprietor at an early stage of development, an embryo, little more than a dream of future property. In this mythic dimension belongs the celebrated remark of the journalist Barres at the moment when the 1914 war had made his dreams come true at last: "Our youth, as is fitting, has gone to yield our blood.") This rather distasteful little game, before it took its place in the museum of rites and folklore, knew a heroic period when kings and tribal chieftains were ritually put to death

according to their "will". Historians assure us that these august martyrs were soon replaced by prisoners, slave and criminals. They may not get hurt anymore, but they've kept the halo.

10

The concept of a common fate is based on the sacrifice of proprietor and dispossessed; in other words, the concept of the human condition is embodied by an ideal and tormented image whose function is to resolve the irresolvable opposition between the mythical sacrifice of a minority and the real sacrifice of everyone else. The function of myth is to unify and make immortal, in a succession of static instants, the dialectic of "will-to-live" and its negation. This universally dominant factitious unity attains its most tangible and concrete representation in communication, particularly in language. Ambiguity is most obvious on this level, it reveals the absence of real communication, it leaves the analyst at the mercy of ridiculous phantoms, at the mercy of words - eternal and changing instants - whose content changes with the person who uses them, just as the notion of sacrifice does. When language is put to the test it can no longer dissimulate the basic misunderstanding and the crisis of participation becomes inevitable. The traces of total revolution can be followed through the language of a period, always menacing and never fulfilled. They are intoxicating and chill signs of the tumult they foreshadow but who is prepared to take them seriously? The discredit striking language is as deep rooted and as instinctive as suspicion towards myths - not that everyone doesn't remain as fond of them as ever. How can key-words be defined by other words? What phrases can show the signs giving the lie to the phraseological organisation of appearances? The best texts still await their justification. Only when a poem by Mallarme becomes the sole reason for an act of revolt will the relationship between poetry and revolution lose its ambiguity. To await and prepare for this moment is not to manipulate information as the last shock-wave whose significance escapes everyone, but as the first repercussion of an act still to come.

II

Born of man's will to survive the uncontrollable forces of nature, myth is a policy of public welfare which has outlived its necessity. It has consolidated itself in its tyrannical strength, reducing life to the sole dimension of survival, denying it as movement and totality.

Attacked, myth will unify all that attacks it. It will engulf and assimilate it, sooner or later. Nothing can withstand it, no image, no concept, that attempts to destroy the dominant spiritual structures. It reigns over the expression of facts and lived experience, on which it imposes its interpretative structure (dramatisation). Private Consciousness is the consciousness of lived experience which finds its expression on the level of organised appearances.

Myth is sustained by rewarded sacrifice. As every individual life is based on its own renunciation, lived experience must be defined as sacrifice and recompense. As a reward for his asceticism, the initiate (the promoted worker, the specialist, the manager - new martyrs canonised democratically) receives a niche carved in the organisation of appearances. He is made to feel at home in alienation. But collective shelters disappeared with unitary societies, and and all that's left today is their concrete translation as a public service: temples, churches, palaces.... memories of a universal protection. Shelters are private nowadays, and even if their protection is far from certain, there can be no mistaking their price.

12

"Private" life is defined primarily in a formal context. Obviously it is created by the social relationships based on privative appropriation, but its essential form is created by the expression of these relationships. Universal, beyond opposition but always opposed, this form makes appropriation a right acknowledged universally from which everyone is excluded, a right to which renunciation is the only access. If it fails to break free of the context imprisoning it (a secession which is called revolution) the most authentic experience can only become conscious, can only be expressed and communicated by a movement of inverting the sign by which its fundamental contradiction is dissimulated. In other words, if any positive project fails to revitalise the praxis of radical overthrow of the conditions of life - conditions which, in their entirety, are those of privative appropriation - then it will not stand the slightest chance of escaping the negativity that reigns over the expression of social relationships: it will be recuperated in inverse perspective, like the image in a mirror. In the totalising perspective in which it conditions the whole of everybody's life, and in which its real and its mythic power can no longer be distinguished (both being real and both mythic) the movement of private appropriation has made negativity the only possible form of expression. Life in its entirety is suspended in a negativity which erodes it and defines it formally. To talk of life today is like talking of rope in the house of a

hanged man. Since the key of will-to-live has been lost, we have wandered through the corridors of an endless mausoleum....Those who still accept their own exhaustion their squalor, and stagnation, can imagine they just couldn't care about life as easily as they can fail to see a living denial of their despair in each of their everyday gestures, a denial which should make them despair only of the penury of their own imagination. These images, as though life had fallen into a trance, offer a field of possibilities with the conquering and the conquered animal at one pole and the saint and the pure hero at the other. The smell in this shithouse is really too much. The world and man as representation reek of carrion, and there's no longer any god around to turn the butchery into beds of lilies. After all the ages men have died, after having accepted, without appreciable change, the answers of the gods, of nature, of biology, it wouldn't be unreasonable to ask if we don't die because so much death comes, and for specific reasons, into every moment of our lives.

13

Private appropriation can be defined essentially as the appropriation of things by means of the appropriation of people. It is the spring and the troubled water where all reflections mingle and blur. Its field of action and influence spanning the whole of history, seems to have been characterised until now by being based on a double determination of behaviour: by an ontology founded on self-negation and sacrifice (its subjective and objective aspects, respectively) and by a fundamental duality, a division between particular and general, between individual and collective, between private and public, between theoretical and practical, between spiritual and material, between intellectual and manual, etc., etc. The contradiction between universal appropriation and universal expropriation postulates that the master has been seen for what he is and isolated. This mythic image of terror impotence and renunciation occurs to slaves, to servants, to all those who cannot stand to go on living as they are, it is the illusory reflection of their participation in property, a natural illusion since they really do participate in it through their daily sacrifice of their energy (called pain or torture in antiquity, and that we refer to as labour or work) since they themselves produce the property which excludes them. The master himself can only cling to the notion of work-as-sacrifice, like Christ to his cross and his nails; it is up to him to authenticate sacrifice, to appear to renounce his right of exclusive enjoyment and no longer to expropriate with a purely human violence (violence without meditation). The grandeur of the gesture obscures its initial violence, the nobility of sacrifice absolves the warrior, the brutality of the conqueror shines in the light of a transcendence whose reign is immanent, the gods are the intransigent guardians of law, the cantank-

erous shepherds of the meek and law abiding flock of "Being and Wanting-to-be-Proprietor".

The gamble on transcendence and the sacrifice entailed are the masters' greatest achievement, their most accomplished submission to the necessity of conquest. Anyone, be he brigand or tyrant, who intrigues for a power unpurified by renunciation will sooner or later be tracked down and killed like a mad dog, or even worse, like someone who pursues no other ends than his own, and whose conception of "work" has been formed without giving a damn what anyone else may think. Tropmann, Landru, Petiot, balancing their budget without taking into account the defence of the Free World, of the State or of human "dignity" never stood a sporting chance. Freebooter, gansters, outlaws, refusing to play by the rules of the game, disturb those whose conscience is at peace (whose consciousness is a reflection of myth) but the masters when they kill the criminal, or enrol him as a cop, re-establish the omnipotence of "eternal truth": those who don't sell themselves lose their right to survive, and those who do sell themselves lose their right to live. The sacrifice of the master is the matrix of humanism and let it be understood once and for all that this makes humanism the grotesque negation of all that is human. Humanism is the master taken seriously at his own game, acclaimed by those who see his apparent sacrifice as a reason to hope for salvation, and not just the caricatural reflection of their own real sacrifice. Justice, dignity, honour liberty... these words that yap or squeal, are they any more than household pets whose masters have calmly awaited their homecoming since the time when heroic domestics fought for their right to walk them on the street? To use them is to forget that they are the ballast which allows power to rise, to rise out of reach. A future regime might well decide against promoting sacrifice in such universal forms, and begin to track these words down and wipe them out; if so, one could well foresee the left wing engaged in one more plaintive battle of words, whose every phrase extols the "sacrifice" of a previous master and calls for the equally mythical sacrifice of a new one (a left wing master, a power mowing down workers in the name of the proletariat.) Bound to the notion of sacrifice, humanism is born of the fear of both masters and slaves: it is the solidarity of a shitscared humanity. But those who have rejected all hierarchical power can use any word as a weapon to beat out the rythm of their action. Lautreamont and the illegal anarchists were well aware of it; so were the dadaists.

Thus, the appropriator becomes a proprietor from the moment he puts the ownership of people and of things in the

hands of God, or of a universal transcendence, whose omnipotence streams down on him as a grace sanctifying his slightest gesture. To oppose the proprietor thus consecrated is to oppose God, Nature, the nation, the people. IN short, to exclude oneself from the world in its entirety. "There can be no question of governing and even less of being governed", writes Marcel Havrenne, so prettily; for those who add violence to his humour, there can no longer be either salvation or damnation, there can be no position in the universal comprehension of things, neither with Satan, the great recuperator of the faithful, nor in any form of myth, since they are the living proof of its redundancy. They were born for a life yet to be invented; in as far as they lived, it was on this hope that they finally came to grief.

Two corollaries of the singularisation of transcendence:

(a) if ontology implies transcendence, any ontology justifies a priori the being of the master and of hierarchised power, wherein the master is reflected in degraded, more or less faithful images.

(b) Upon the distinction between manual and intellectual work, between practice and theory, is superimposed the distinction between work-as-real-sacrifice and its organisation in the form of apparent sacrifice.

It is tempting to explain fascism - amongst other reasons - as an act of faith an auto-da-fe of a bourgeoisie haunted by the murder of God and the destruction of the great sacred spectacle, vowing itself to the Devil, to an inverted mysticism, a black mysticism with its rituals and holocausts. Mysticism and high finance.

It should never be forgotten that hierarchical power cannot exist without transcendence, without ideologies, without myths. Demystification itself could be turned into a myth, it would be sufficient to "omit", most philosophically, active demystification. After which all demystification, separated hygienically into little pieces, becomes painless, euthanatic, in a word, humanitarian. Were it not for the movement of demystification which will end by demystifying the demystifiers.

14

When the bourgeois revolutionaries attacked the mythical organisation of appearances, they attacked, quite despite themselves, not only the keypoints of unitary power, but the keypoints of any hierarchical power whatsoever. Can this inevitable mistake explain the guilt-complex so typical of bourgeois mentality? The mistake was undoubtedly inevitable.

In the first place, a mistake because once the clouds of lies dissimulating privative appropriation was pierced, myth itself disintegrated and a vacuum was revealed which

could only be filled by poetry and delirious liberty. Certainly, orgiastic poetry to date has not destroyed power. Its failure is easy to explain, and its ambiguous signs reveal the blows struck at the same time as they heal the wounds. Historians and aesthetes can keep their collections: one has only to pick at the scab of memory and the cries, words and gestures of the past make the whole body of power start to bleed freshly once more. The whole organisation of the survival of memories will not stop them being forgotten as soon as they come to life again and begin to dissolve in experience: the same applies to our survival in the construction of our everyday lives.

An inevitable process: as Marx showed, the appearance of exchange value and its symbolic substitution by money split open a radical crisis latent in the heart of the unitary world. Merchandise introduced a universal character into human relationships (a dollar bill represents all I can buy with this sum) and an egalitarian character (equal things are exchanged). This "egalitarian universality" partly escapes both the exploiter and the exploited, while both accept it as a common measure. They discover themselves face to face, no longer confronted in the mystery of divine birth and ascendance, as the nobility once was, but in an intelligible transcendence, that of the Logos, a body of laws that can be understood by everybody, even if any such understanding remains cloaked in mystery. A mystery with its initiates, first of all priests, struggling to maintain the Logos in the limbo of divine mysticism, soon yielding to philosophers, then to technicians, both their position and the dignity of their sacred mission. From Plato's republic to the cybernetic state.

Thus, under the pressure of exchange value and of technology (which could be called "the do-it-yourself-mediation-kit"), myth was gradually laicised. However, two facts are to be noted:

(a) As the Logos frees itself from mystic unity it affirms itself at once in and against it. Upon magical and analogical structures of behaviour are superimposed rational and logical structures which negate while conserving them (mathematics, poetics, economics, aesthetics, psychology, etc.)..

(b) Each time the Logos or the "organisation of intelligible appearances" becomes more independent it tends to break away from the sacred and to become fragmented. As such as it presents a double to unitary power. We have already seen that the sacred expresses the seizure of the totality by power and that anyone wanting to accede to the totality must do so through the mediation of power: the interdict striking mystics, alchemists, gnostics, is sufficient proof. This also explains why power today

"protects" specialists, in whom it can sense - but without really trusting them - the missionaries of a reconsecrated Logos. There are historic signs that testify to the attempt made to found within mystic unitary power a rival power asserting its unity in the name of the Logos: amongst which, christian syncretism, the psychological explanation of God, the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Aufklarung.

The masters who tried to retain the unity of the Logos were well aware that only unity can stabilise power. Examined closely their efforts have not been as vain as the fragmentation of the Logos in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries would seem to prove. In the general movement of atomisation, the Logos has been broken down into specialised techniques (physics, biology, sociology, papyrology, etc., etc.) but at the same time the need to re-establish the totality has become more and more imperative. It should never be forgotten that an all-powerful technocratic power could now begin to plannify the totality: the Logos would succeed myth as the seizure of the totality by a future unitary (cybernetic) power. In this perspective, the vision of the Encyclopedistes (strictly rationalised progress stretching into the indefinite future) would only have known a period of indecision lasting two centuries before its realisation. This is the direction in which the stalino-cyberneticians are preparing the future. In this perspective peaceful co-existence should be seen as the basis of totalitarian unity. Everyone must realise they have already rebelled.

15

We know the battlefield. The problem now is preparing for battle. Otherwise the pataphysician, armed with his totality without a technique, and the cybernetician, armed with his technique without a totality, will consummate their political coitus. And they will be duly blessed.

From the point of view of hierarchical power myth could only be deconsecrated if the Logos was reconsecrated, or if at least its deconsecrating elements were reconsecrated. To attack the sacred was at the same time to liberate the totality, thus to destroy power. But the power of the bourgeoisie, broken, impoverished, constantly harassed, maintains a relative stability by its use of this ambiguity: technology, which deconsecrates objectively, appears subjectively as an instrument of liberation. Not a real liberation, which could only be won by deconsecration, that is to say, by the end of the spectacle, but a caricature, an ersatz, a controlled hallucination. What the unitary vision of the world transferred to the beyond (the image of elevation), fragmentary power inscribes in a future state of increased well-being (the image of the pro-ject), of tomorrows-that-will-be-another-day, but which will really no more than

today multiplied by the number of gadgets to be produced. From the slogan "Live in God" we have gone on to the humanistic motto "Survive as long as you can" which means "Stay young at heart and you'll live a long time."

Myth, deconsecrated and fragmented, loses its grandeur and its spirituality. It becomes an impoverished form, retaining former characteristics but revealing them as something concrete, brutal and tangible. God doesn't run the show any more, and until the day the Logos takes over, armed with technology and science, the spectres of alienation will materialise everywhere, sowing disorder in their path. Pay attention to them: they are the first manifestations of a future order. We must start to play from this moment if the future is not to be ruled by the principle of survival, or if even survival itself is not to become impossible (the hypothesis of humanity destroying itself). And with it, obviously, the whole experiment of constructing everyday life. The vital objectives of struggle for the construction of everyday life are the key-points of all hierarchical power. To construct one is to destroy the other. Caught in the vortex of deconsecration and reconsecration, essentially we stand for the negation of the following elements: the organisation of appearances as a spectacle where everyone denies themselves; the separation on which private life is based since it is there that the objective separation between proprietors and dispossessed is lived and reflected on every level; and sacrifice. The three are obviously interdependent, just as their opposites: participation, communication, realisation. The same applies to their context: non-totality (a bankrupt world, a controlled totality) and totality.

16

The human relationships previously dissolved in divine transcendence (in the totality crowned by the sacred) decanted and became solid as soon as the sacred stopped acting as a catalyst. Their materiality was revealed and, as the capricious laws of economy succeeded those of Providence, the power of men began to appear behind the power of the gods. Today endless roles correspond to the mythical role everyone once played under the divine spotlights. Though their masks are human faces they still force both actor and extra to deny their real life, to fulfil the dialectic of real and mythical sacrifice. The spectacle is nothing but deconsecrated and fragmented myth. It forms the carapace of a power (which could also be called essential mediation) that is exposed to every blow once it no longer succeeds in dissimulating, in the cacaphony where all cries drown one

like the revolution, or personal). But we must realise we are also prevented from following the course of these moments freely (apart from the moment of revolution itself) not only by the general repression exercised by power, but also by the exigencies of our own struggle, of our tactics, etc. It is equally important to find the means of balancing this additional "percentage of error," by widening the scope of these moments and by showing their qualitative importance. Our remarks on the construction of everyday life cannot be recuperated by cultural or sub-cultural establishments (Evergreen, New Left Review, thinkers with three weeks paid holiday) for the very good reason that all situationist ideas are no more than the development of acts attempted constantly by countless people to try and prevent another day being no more than twenty-four hours of wasted time. Are we an avant-garde? If we are, to be avant-garde means to keep abreast of reality.

It's not the monopoly of intelligence we hold, but that of its use. Our position is strategic, we are at the heart of every possible conflict. The qualitative is our force-de-frappe. People who half understand this review ask us for an explanatory monograph, thanks to which they will be able to convince themselves they are an intelligent and cultured person, that is to say, an idiot. Someone who gets fed up and chucks it in the gutter has more sense. Sooner or later it will have to be understood that the words and phrases we use are still outdated by reality. The distortion and clumsiness of the way we express ourselves (that someone with taste called, not inaccurately, "a somewhat irritating kind of hermetic terrorism") comes from our central position on the illdefined and shifting frontier where language sequestered by power (conditioning) and free language (poetry) fight out their complex war. To those who can't keep up with us we prefer those who reject us impatiently because our language isn't yet authentic poetry, that is, isn't yet the free construction of everyday life.

Everything related to thought is related to the spectacle. Almost everyone lives in a state of terror at the possibility they might awake to themselves, and their fear is carefully kept alive by power. Conditioning, the poetry of power, has subjected so much to its control (all material equipment belongs to it: the press, television, stereotypes, magic, tradition, economy, technics - what we call sequestered language) that it has almost succeeded in dissolving what Marx called the non-dominated sector of nature to replace it by another (viz. our identikit picture of "the survivor"). Lived experience, however, cannot be

another out and become harmonious the nature of private appropriation. And just how much shit it heaps on everyone.

Roles have become impoverished in the context of a fragmentary power eaten away by deconsecration just as the spectacle betrays its impoverishment in comparison with myth. They betray its mechanisms and its artifice so clumsily that power, to defend itself against popular denunciation of the spectacle, has no alternative but to denounce it first itself. Even more clumsily it changes actors and ministers, it organises pogroms of putative or prefabricated producers of the spectacle (agents of Moscow or Wall Street, of the judeocracy or les deux cent families). Which is to say that the whole cast has been forced to become hams, that style has been replaced by manner.

Myth, as an immobile totality, encompassed all movement (the pilgrimage, for example, as fulfilment and adventure within immobility). On the one hand, the spectacle can only conceive the totality by reducing it to a fragment inserted in a series of fragments (psychological, sociological, biological, philological, mythological visions of the world), while on the other hand, it is situated at the point where the movement of deconsecration converges with the attempt to reconsecrate. Thus it can only succeed in imposing immobility within the movement of reality, the movement changing it despite its resistance. In the era of fragmentation, the organisation of appearances makes movement a linear succession of immobile instants (this progress from notch to notch is perfectly exemplified by Stalin's "dialmat"). Under what we have called "the colonisation of everyday life," the only possible change is change of fragmentary roles. In terms of more or less inflexible conventions once is successively: citizen, father, sexual partner, politician, specialist businessman, producer, consumer. Yet what supervisor doesn't feel watched himself? You may get a fuck, but you'll always get fucked. The proverb is universal.

The epoch of fragmentation has at least eliminated all doubt on one point; everyday life is the battlefield where the battle between the totality and power takes place, power using all its strength to control it.

What do we demand in pitting the power of everyday life against hierarchical power? We demand everything. We have taken our place in the general conflict stretching from domestic squabbles to revolutionary war, and we have gambled on the will to live. This means we must survive as anti-survivors. Fundamentally we are only concerned with the moments when life shatters the glaciation of survival (whether these moments be unconscious or theorised, historic,

reduced to a series of empty configurations with such facility. Resistance to the exterior organisation of life, to the organisation of life as survival, contains more poetry than any volume of verse or prose, and the poet, in the literary sense of the word, is the person who has sense or understood that this is so. But the life of any such poetry hangs on a thread. Certainly, as the situationists understand it, it is irreducible and cannot be recuperated by power (as soon as an act is power.) However it is encircled by power. It is by isolation that power encircles the irreducible and pins it down; yet complete isolation is not feasible. The pincer movement has two claws; first, the threat of disintegration (insanity, illness, destitution, suicide) and, secondly, remote-controlled therapeutics, the first granting death, the second no more than survival (empty communication, the cohesion of friends or families, psychoanalysis prostituted to alienation, medicare, ergo-therapy). Sooner or later the S.I. must define itself as a therapeutic we are ready to defend the poetry created by everyone against the false poetry manipulated solely by power (conditioning). Doctors and psychoanalysts had better get it straight too, unless they are prepared, one fine day, to take the consequences for what they have done, along with architects and other apostles of survival.

18

All antagonisms that have not been resolved, integrated and superceded are losing their significance. These antagonisms can only evolve while they remain imprisoned in previous forms which have not been superceded (anti-cultural art in the cultural spectacle, for example). Any radical opposition that has either failed or been partially successful - which comes down to the same thing - etiolates gradually into reformist opposition. Fragmentary opposition is like the teeth on a cogwheel, they marry another and make the machine go round, the machine of the spectacle, the machine of power.

Myth held all antagonisms in the archetype of manichaeism. But what can function as an archetype in a fragmented society? In fact, the memory of previous antagonisms, utilised in a patently devalued and non-aggressive form, appears today as the last attempt to bring some coherence to the organisation of appearances, so great is the extent to which the spectacle has become a spectacle of undifferentiated confusion. We are ready to wipe out all trace of these memories harnessing all the energy contained in previous antagonisms for a radical conflict yet to come. A river will burst from all the springs blocked up by power, a river which will change the face of the world.

A travesty of antagonism, power insists that everyone be for or against The Rolling Stones, le nouveau roman, the

Minivan, chinese food, LSD., short skirts, the United Nations, pop art, nationalisation, thermonuclear war and hitchhiking. Everyone is asked their opinion of every detail to stop them having one of the totality. The manoeuvre, however inept, might have worked were the commercial salesmen involved not waking up to their own alienation. To the passivity imposed on the dispossessed masses is added the growing passivity of directors and actors submitted to the abstract laws of the market and the spectacle, exercising a less and less effective power over the world. Already signs of revolt are breaking out among the actors, stars who try and escape publicity or rulers who criticise their own power Brigitte Bardot or Fidel Castro. The tools of power wear out. Their desire for their own freedom, as instruments, should be calculated on.

The spectacular reformism of Christianity appeared at the moment when the slave revolt threatened to overthrow the structure of power and to reveal the relationship between transcendence and the mechanism of private appropriation. Its central democratic demand was not that slaves accede to the reality of a human life - impossible without denouncing appropriation as a movement of exclusion -but; on the contrary, to an existence whose source of happiness is mythical (the imitation of Christ as the price of the hereafter). What has changed? Waiting for the hereafter has become waiting for the tomorrow-that-will-be-another-day; the sacrifice of real and immediate life is the price at which the illusory liberty of an apparent life is bought. The spectacle, is the sphere where forced labour is transformed into voluntary sacrifice. There is nothing more suspect than the formula "to everyone according to his work" in a world where work is the blackmail of survival; to say nothing of the formula "to everyone according to his needs" in a world where needs are determined by power. Any construction attempting to define itself in an autonomous, and therefore partial, way can be relegated to reformism. It is unaware of its real definition by the negativity in which everything is suspended. It tries to build on quicksand as though it were rock. Contempt and misunderstanding of the context fixed by hierarchical power can only end by strengthening this context. On the other hand, the spontaneous acts we can see forming everywhere against power and its spectacle must be warned of all the obstacles in their path, and must find tactics corresponding to the strength of the enemy and to its means of recuperation. These tactics, which we are about to popularise, are those of deflection (detournement).

Sacrifice must be rewarded. In exchange for their real sacrifice the workers receive the instruments of their liberation (comfort, gadgets) which, however, are a purely fictitious liberation since power controls the ways in which all material equipment can be used, since power utilises to its own ends both the instruments and those who use them. The christian and bourgeois revolutions democratised mythical sacrifice or the "sacrifice of the master." Today, there are countless initiates who receive the crumbs of power for having put to public service the totality of their partial knowledge. They are no longer called "initiates" and not yet "priests of the Logos,": they are just known as specialists.

On the level of the spectacle their power is incontestable: the candidate on "Double Your Money" or the G.P.O. clerk, itemising the mechanical subtleties of their Anglia, both identify with the specialist, and we know how production managers can use these identifications to bring skilled labourers to hell. Essentially, the true mission of the technocrats would be to unify the Logos, if only, through one of the Contradiction of fragmentary power, they weren't all so pathetically isolated. Alienated as they are by their interference with one another, they know the whole of a fragment and all realisation escapes them. What real control can the atomic technician, the strategist, or the political specialist exercise over nuclear weapons? What absolute control can power hope to impose on all the gestures forming against it? The stage is so crowded that only chaos reigns as master. "Order reigns and doesn't govern" (Editorial Notes, Internationale Situationniste, 6).

Insofar as the specialist takes part in the construction of the instruments that condition and transform the world he initiates the revolt of the privileged. Previously any such revolt has been called fascism. It is essentially an operative revolt - didn't Nietzsche see Wagner as a precursor? - when actors who for a long time have been pushed to the side suddenly demand to hold the leading roles. Clinically speaking, fascism is the hysteria of the spectacular world as it reaches a paroxysm. In this paroxysm the spectacle momentarily assures its unity, and at the same time it reveals its radical inhumanity. Through fascism and stalinism, its romantic crises, the spectacle betrays its true nature: it is a disease.

We are poisoned by the spectacle. All the elements necessary for a cure (that is, for the construction of our everyday lives) are in the hands of specialists. Thus, from one point of view or another, we are highly interested in all of them. Some are chronic cases: we don't intend, for example to try and show the specialists of power, the rulers, just how

far their delirium has carried them. On the other hand we are ready to take account of the rancour of specialists imprisoned by roles which are constricted grotesque or infamous. We must confess, however, that our indulgence has its limits. If, despite all we do, they continue stubbornly to put their guilty conscience and their bitterness at the service of power, to fabricate the conditioning that colonises their own everyday lives; if they continue to prefer an illusory representation in the hierarchy to the reality of realisation; if they continue to brandish their specialisation, (their painting, their novels, their equations, their sociometry, their ballistics); finally, if they know perfectly well - and very soon it won't be possible to ignore it - that only the S.I. and power hold the key to their specialisation, if then they still choose to serve power because power, battenning on their inertia, has so far selected them for its service, then fuck them! No one could be more generous. Above all they should understand that henceforth the revolt of non-ruling actors is a part of the revolt against the spectacle.

21

The general abhorrence excited by the lumpenproletariat comes from the use to which it was put by the bourgeoisie. It served both as a means to regulate power and as a source of recruits for the more equivocal forces of law and order: cops, informers, hired guns, artists... Despite which, its implicit critique of the society of work is remarkably radical. Its open contempt for both employers and employees contains a valid critique of work as alienation, a critique that hasn't been taken seriously until now both because the lumpenproletariat was essentially the sector of all that was ambiguous in society, and also because during the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries the struggle against natural alienation and the production of well-being still seemed to be valid pretexts for work.

Once the abundance of consumer goods is known to be no more than the other side of an alienated production, the lumpenproletariat acquires a new dimension: it liberates a contempt for organised work that, in the age of the Welfare State, is gradually taking the proportions of a demand that only the ruling classes still refuse to acknowledge. Despite the constant attempts of power to recuperate it, every experiment affected on everyday life, that is, every attempt to construct it - an illegal activity since the destruction of feudal power, where it was restricted and reserved for a minority - becomes concrete today through its critique of alienating work and its refusal to submit to forced labour. So much so that the new proletariat tends to be defined negatively as a "Front Against Forced Labour" bringing together all those who resist their annexation by power. This is our field of action. It is here that we gamble

on the ruse of history against the ruse of power, it is here that we back the worker, be he steelworker or artist, who - consciously or not - rejects organised work and life, against the worker who - consciously or not - accepts to work at the orders of power. In this perspective, it is not unreasonable to foresee a transitional period during which automation and the will of the new proletariat leave work solely to specialists, reducing managers and bureaucrats to the rank of temporary slaves. In the context of complete automation, the "workers" instead of supervising machines, would be free to humour cybernetic specialists whose sole task was to increase production - a production which had been radically transformed, a production serving life and not survival.

22

Unitary power endeavoured to dissolve individual existence in a collective consciousness, so that each social unity defined itself subjectively as a particle with a clearly determined weight suspended as though in oil. Everyone had to feel blinded by the evidence that the hand of God, shaking the recipient, used everything for designs of his own which transcended the understanding of each particular human being, and appeared as the emanations of a supreme will bestowing sense on the slightest change. (In any case, all perturbation was an ascending or descending movement towards harmony: the Four Reigns, the Wheel of Fortune, the trials sent by the gods). One can speak of a collective consciousness in the sense that it was simultaneously for each individual and for everyone, consciousness of myth and consciousness of a particular-existence-within-myth. The power of the illusion is such that authentic life draws its significance from what is not; from this stems the clerical condemnation of life, reduced to pure contingency, to squalid materiality, to vain appearances and to the lowest level of a transcendence becoming increasingly debased in the measure that it escapes mythic organisation.

God was the quarantor of space and time, whose co-ordinates defined unitary society. He was the common reference-point for all men; space and time came together in him, as in him all beings became one with their destiny. In the era of fragmentation, man is torn apart between a space and a time that no transcendence can unify through the mediation of a centralised power. We live in a space and time that are out of joint, deprived of all reference-point and all co-ordinates, as though we were never to come into contact with ourselves although everything invites us to.

There is a place where one makes oneself and a time in which one plays. The space of everyday life, that of one's true

realisation, is encircled by every form of conditioning. The restricted space of our true realisation defines us, though we define ourselves in the time of the spectacle. Or, alternatively: our consciousness is no longer consciousness of myth and of particular-being-in-the-myth, it is consciousness of the spectacle and of the particular-role in-the-spectacle (I pointed out above the relationship between all ontology and unitary power, and in this context we could remember that the crisis of ontology appears with the movement towards fragmentation). To express this once more in different terms: in the space-time relationship in which everyone and everything is situated time has become the imaginary (the field of identifications); space defines us, although we define ourselves in the imaginary and although the imaginary defines us in as far as we are subjectivities.

Our liberty is that of an abstract temporality in which we are named in the language of power (these names are the roles assigned us) with the choice left to us of finding synonyms officially registered as such. The space of authentic realisation (the space of our everyday life) is, on the contrary, the kingdom of silence. There is no name to name the space of lived experience if not in poetry, in language struggling to be free of the domination of power.

23

When the bourgeoisie deconsecrated and fragmented myth its primary demand was for independence of consciousness (demands for freedom of thought, freedom of the press, freedom of research and refusal of dogma). So consciousness stopped being more or less consciousness-reflecting-myth. It became consciousness of successive roles played in the spectacle. Above all what the bourgeoisie demanded was the freedom of actors and extras in a spectacle no longer organised by God, by his cops, and his priests, but by natural and economic laws, "Inexorable and capricious laws" : cops and specialists on the payroll once again.

God has been torn aside like a useless bandage and the wound has stayed raw. The bandage may have stopped the wound healing up, but it justified suffering, it gave it a sense well worth a few shots of morphine. Now, suffering has no justification whatsoever, and morphine is far from cheap. Separation has become concrete. Anyone at all can put their finger on it, and the only answer cybernetic society can offer us is to become spectators of putrescence and decay, spectators of survival.

Hegel's drama of consciousness is more exactly consciousness of drama. Romanticism echoes like the cry of a soul torn from

from the body, a suffering made even more intolerable because we all find ourselves alone to face the collapse of the sacred totality, and of all the Houses of Usher.

24

The totality is objective reality in the movement of which subjectivity can only participate as realisation. Anything apart from the realisation of everyday life belongs to the spectacle where survival is frozen (hibernation) and served out in slices. There can be no authentic realisation except in objective reality, in the totality. All the rest is caricature. The objective realisation that functions in the mechanism of the spectacle is nothing but the success of power-manipulated objects (the "objective realisation in subjectivity" of famous artists, of film-stars, of the celebrities of Who's Who). On the level of the organisation of appearances, every success - and even every failure - is inflated until it becomes a stereotype, and is broadcast by the information media as though it were the only possible success or failure. So far power has been the only judge, though pressure has been brought to bear on its judgement. Its criteria alone are valid for those who accept the spectacle and are satisfied with playing a role within it. And there are no more artists on that scene, there are only extras.

25

The space and time of private life were harmonised in the space and time of myth. The universal harmony of Fourier answers this perverted harmony. As soon as myth no longer encompasses the individuals and the partial in a totality dominated by the sacred, each fragment erects itself as a totality. The fragment erected as a totality, is in fact, the totalitarian. In the dissociated space and time that makes private life, time, made absolute in the form of abstract liberty, which is that of the spectacle, consolidates by its very dissociation the spatial absolute of everyday life, its isolation, its constriction.

The mechanism of the alienating spectacle exerts such strength the private life reaches the point of being defined as something that is deprived of spectacle. The fact that is escapes spectacular roles and categories is experienced as an additional privation, as a sense of sickness which power uses as a pretext to reduce everyday life to insignificant gestures (to smoke a joint, to read a book, to make a cup of tea).

26

The spectacle that imposes its norms on lived experience itself stems from lived experience. The time of the spectacle, lived in the form of successive roles, makes the space of auth-

entic experience the area of objective impotence, while, at the same time, objective impotence, that due to the conditioning of private appropriation, makes the spectacle the absolute of virtual liberty.

Elements born of lived experience are only acknowledged on the level the spectacle, where they are expressed in the form of stereotypes, although any such expression is constantly opposed in lived experience and denied by authentic lived experience. The identikit picture of the survivors - to whom Nietzsche refers as the "little people" or the "last men" - can only be conceived in terms of the following dialectic of possibility-impossibility.

(a) the possible on the level of the spectacle (variety of abstract roles) reinforces the impossible on the level of authentic experience.

(b) the impossible (that is, the limits imposed on real experience by private appropriation) determines the field of abstract possibilities.

Survival has two dimensions. As against this reduction what forces can focus attention on the everyday problem of all human beings: the dialectic of survival and of life? Either the specific forces on which the S.I. has gambled will allow these contraries to be superceded, reuniting space and time in the construction of everyday life; or life and survival will become locked in their antagonism, growing weaker and weaker until the point of ultimate confusion and ultimate poverty is reached.

27

Lived experience is shattered and labelled spectacularly in categories, biological, sociological, etc., which, while being related to the communicable, never communicate more than the facts emptied of their authentically experienced content. Thus it is that hierarchical power, imprisoning everyone in the objective mechanism of private appropriation (admission-exclusion, viz. section 3) also dictates the nature of subjectivity. Insofar as it does so it forces, with a varying degree of success, each individual subjectivity to objectivise itself, that is to say, to become an object it can manipulate. This forms an extremely interesting dialectic which should be analysed in greater detail (cf. the objective realisation in subjectivity - that of power - and the objective realisation in objectivity - which comes into the praxis of constructing everyday life and of destroying power.)

Facts re deprived of content in the name of the communicable,

in the name of an abstract universality, in the name of a perverted harmony in which everyone realises themselves in an inverted perspective. In this context, the S.I. belongs to the tradition of dissent which encompasses Sade, Fourier, Lewis Carroll, Lautremont, surrealism and lettrism - at least in its less-known forms, which were also the most radical.

Within a fragment erected as a totality, each further fragment is itself totalitarian. Sensibility, desire, will, taste, the subconscious and all the categories of the ego were treated as absolutes by individualism. Today sociology is enriching the categories of psychology, but the introduction of variety into the roles merely emphasises the monotony of the reflex of identification. The liberty of the "Survivor" will be to assume the abstract constituent to which he has "chosen" to reduce himself. Once there is no question of true realisation, only a psychosociological dramaturgy is left, in which subjectivity functions as an overflow to get rid of the effects one has worn for the daily exhibition. Survival becomes the final stage of life organised as the mechanical reproduction of memory.

28

Until now the approach to the totality has been falsified. Power has been inserted parasitically as an indispensable mediation between men and nature. But the relationship between men and nature is founded only by praxis. It is praxis that is always breaking the veneer of lies that myth and its substitutes try to substantiate. It is praxis, even alienated-praxis, that maintains contact with the totality. By revealing its fragmentary character, praxis reveals at the same time the real totality (réalité): it is the totality being realised through its opposite, the fragment.

In the perspective of praxis, every fragment is the totality, in the perspective of power, which alienates praxis, every fragment is totalitarian. This should be enough to wreck the attempts cybernetic power will make to envelop praxis in a mystique, although the seriousness of these attempts should not be underestimated.

All praxis belongs to our project. It enters with its share of alienation, with the dross of power: however, we can purify it. We will clarify the manoeuvres of subjection and the strength and purity of the acts of refusal. We will use our strategy, not in a manichean vision, but as a means of developing this conflict in which, everywhere at every moment, adversaries are seeking one another and only clashing accidentally, lost in an irremediable darkness and confusion.

Everyday life has always been emptied to substantiate apparent life, but appearances, in their mythical cohesion, were powerful enough to ensure that no one ever became conscious of everyday life. The poverty and emptiness of the spectacle betrayed by every type of capitalism, by every type of bourgeoisie, has revealed the existence of everyday life (a shelter-life, but a shelter for what and from what?) and simultaneously the poverty of everyday life. As reification and bureaucratisation eat deeper and deeper into life, the exhaustion of the spectacle and of everyday life become increasingly evident to everyone. The conflict between human and the inhuman has also been transferred to the plane of appearances. As soon as marxism became an ideology, Marx's struggle against ideology in the name of the richness in life was transformed into an ideological anti-ideology, a spectacle of the anti-spectacle (just as within the avant-garde, the fate of the anti-spectacular spectacle is its restriction to the actors anti-artistic art being created and understood only by artists; the relationship between this anti-ideological ideology and the function of the professional revolutionary in leninism should be studied). Thus, manicheanism was resuscitated for a time. Why did St. Augustine attack the manicheans with such acerbity? Because he knew the danger of a myth offering only one solution, victory of the good over the evil; he knew that this impossibility threatened to wreck the whole structure of myth and to focus attention on the contradiction between mythic and authentic life. Christianity offers the third way, the way of sacred confusion. What christianity accomplished by the strength of myth is accomplished today by the strength of things. There isn't any longer the slightest antagonism between soviet workers and capitalist workers, there isn't any longer the slightest antagonism between the bomb of the stalinist bureaucrats and the bomb of the non-stalinist bureaucrats there is only unity in the chaos of reified beings.

Who is responsible? Who should be shot? We are dominated by a system, by an abstract form. Degrees of humanity and inhumanity are measured by purely quantitative variations of passivity. The quality is the same everywhere: we are all proletarianised, or well on the way to being so. What are the traditional "revolutionaries" doing? They are eliminating certain distinctions, they are making sure that no proletarians are any more proletarian than everyone else. But what party wants to end the proletariat?

The perspective of survival has become intolerable. What we are suffering from is the weight of things in a vacuum. That's what reification is: everyone and everything falling at an equal speed, everyone and everything stigmatised with their equal value. The reign of equal values has realised the christain project, but it

some extent in a spectacular manner) that we can give those who discover revolutionary power through our theoretical and practical positions, power without mediation, power entailing the direct action of everyone. One guiding image could be Durrutti's brigade moving from village to village, liquidating the bourgeois elements, and leaving the workers to see to their own organisation.

(b) The intelligentsia is power's hall of mirrors. Opposing power, it never offers more cathartic identifications playing on the passivity of those whose every act reveals real dissidence. The radicalism - of gesture, obviously, not of theory - which could be glimpsed in the Committee of 100 and in the "Declaration of the 121" suggests, however, a number of different possibilities. We are capable of precipitating this crisis, but only by entering the intelligentsia as a power (against the intelligentsia). This phase - which must precede and be contained within the phase described in (a) - will put us in the perspective of the Nietzschean project. We will form a small, almsy alchemical, experimental group within which the realisation of the total man can be started. Nietzsche could only conceive an undertaking of this nature within the framework of the hierarchical principle. It is, in fact, within this framework that we find ourselves. Therefore it is of the utmost importance that we present ourselves without the slightest ambiguity (on the level of the group, the purification of the centre and the elimination of residues now seem to be completed). We accept the hierarchical framework in which we are placed waiting impatiently to abolish our domination of others, others we can only dominate on the ground of our criteria against domination.

(c) Tactically, our communication should be diffused from a centre that remains more or less occult. We will set up a non-materialised network (direct relationships, episodic contacts without ties, development of embryonic relations based on sympathy and understanding, in much the same way as the red agitators before the arrival of the revolutionary armies). We will claim as our own, through their analysis, various radical gestures (acts, writings, political attitudes, works) and we will consider that our own acts and analyses are demanded by the majority of people.

In the same way as God formed the reference-point of past unitary society, we are preparing to create the central reference-point of a unitary society now possible. This point cannot be fixed. As against the ever-renewed confusion that cybernetic society from the past of inhumanity, it stands for the game that everyone will play, "the moving order of the future."

has realised it without christianity (as Pascal understood it) and, above all, it has realised it over God's dead body, contrary to Paſcal's expectations.

The spectacle and everyday life coexist in the reign of equal values. People and things are interchangeable. The world of reification is a world without a centre, like the new towns, which are its decor. The present withdraws before the promise of a perpetual future which is not more than a mechanical extension of the past. Time itself is deprived of a centre. In this concentration-camp universe victims and torturers wear the same mask, and only the torture is real. No fresh ideology will be able to soothe the pain, neither that of the totality (the Logos), nor that of nihilism, which will be the crutches of the cybernetic state. They condemn all hierarchical power, whatever its organisation and dissimulation. The antagonism the S.I. is about to renew is the oldest of all: it is radical antagonism, and that is why it can assimilate all that has been left by the great individuals and insurrectionary movements of the past.

30

So many other banalities could be examined and reversed. The best things never come to an end. Before rereading the above - even the most mediocre intelligence will understand by the third attempt - it would be wise to concentrate very carefully on the following text, for these notes, as fragmentary as the preceding, must be discussed in detail. The central point is the question of the S.I. and revolutionary power.--

The S.I. being aware of the crisis of both mass parties and "elites" must embody the supercession of both the bolshevik C.C. (supercession of the mass party) and of the Nietzschean project (supercession of the intelligentsia).

(a) Whenever any power has set itself up to direct revolutionary will, it has a priori undermined the power of the revolution. The bolshevik Central Committee was defined as at once concentration and representation. Concentration of a power antagonistic to bourgeois power and representation of the will of the masses. This double characteristic determined that it rapidly became no more than an empty power, a power of empty representation, and that it soon rejoined in a common form (bureaucracy) bourgeois power, forced to follow a similar evolution. The conditions of concentrated power and of mass representation exist potentially in the S.I. since it monopolises the qualitative and since its ideas are in everyone's mind. Nevertheless, we refuse both concentrated power and the right of representation, conscious that we are taking the only public attitude (we cannot avoid being known to

THESES ON UNITARY URBANISM

1

Town planning doesn't exist: it's just an ideology - in Marx's sense of the word. Architecture, of course, does: it is a product coated in ideology but real just the same, providing superficial satisfaction of falsified needs. All the talk of town planning, of urban renewal and "urbanology" is to this repressive architecture exactly what the hoardings and commercials are to mass-produced products: pure spectacular ideology. Modern capitalism organizes the reduction of all social life to a spectacle, but the only spectacle it can stage is that of our own alienation. Its vision of the city is its masterpiece.

2

Urban development is the CAPITALIST DEFINITION OF SPACE. It is one particular realization of the technically possible, and it excludes all alternatives. Urban studies should be seen - like aesthetics, whose path to complete confusion they are about to follow - as a rather neglected type of penal reform: an epidemiology of the social disease called revolt.

The "theory" of urban development seeks to enlist the support of its victims, to persuade them that they have really chosen the bureaucratic form of conditioning expressed by modern architecture. To this end, all the emphasis is placed on Utility, the better to hide the fact that this architecture's real utility is to control men and reify the relations between them. People need a roof over their heads: super-blocks provide it. People need informing & entertaining: telly does just that. But of course the kind of information, entertainment and place to live which such arguments help sell are not created for people at all, but rather without them and against them.

The whole of urban planning must be understood as a sector of the publicity propaganda effort of our society. It's the organization of participation in something in which it is impossible to participate.

3

The aim of traffic control is the organization of universal isolation. This is why its perfection is the major "problem" of the modern city. It is the negation of the human encounter. It exhausts all the energies needed for real communication.

The spectacle has to compensate for the impossibility of participation, and this compensation is made at the level of the individual's living-place and means of transport: the apartment and car are status symbols par excellence. One doesn't live somewhere in the city, one lives somewhere in the hierarchy. Top people travel the most: power tends to be expressed objectively by the number of, and the distance between, places where the individual has to be seen in the course of the day. To appear in three different capitals in the course of 24 hours is enough in itself to prove a man's prestige in the ranks of the "decision-makers".

4

The spectacle's job is to integrate the entire population. The organization of urban space is one of its two chief weapons, the other one being the maintenance of a permanent information network. Together, these guarantee a secure framework to control and reinforce actual living conditions. Our first task must be to help people refuse to be defined by their concrete environment, or to see themselves in the stereotyped behaviour patterns proposed as models by the mass media. Such a refusal is a precondition for the establishment of advance bases - the first areas captured for real human activity in which people freely recognize themselves.

We are obviously bound to remain in the era of reified and reifying cities for a long time to come, but the attitude with which people face this situation can change straight away. We have to propagate suspicion and subversion of those identical, air-conditioned, brightly coloured kindergartens, the new dormitory cities of both East and West. It is time to murder sleep.

By "unitary urbanism" we mean a practical critique of contemporary town planning's manipulation of cities and their inhabitants - an authentic expression of all its endeavours to repress, nurtured and moulded by all the tensions of everyday life. Concretely, we envisage the setting up of bases for experimental living: the gathering together of those who want to become masters of their own lives, in areas equipped and defined entirely by the developing demands and needs of that project. Such bases could not be the reserve of some activity separate from society at large: no spatio-temporal zone can be exempt from the pressures of world society, although the spectacle tries to create this illusion by means of the concept of Leisure. (The packaged holiday, obviously, is a model of well-nigh total control) Situationist bases would act as bridgeheads and, far from cutting themselves off, would take the offensive in an attempt to invade every level of everyday life.

Unitary urbanism is the opposite of a specialized activity. To accept the organization of urban space as the domain of a particular brand of expert is to swallow not only the lie of town planning, but also the lie which vitiates the whole of life. The town planners promise happiness. They shall be judged accordingly. The co-ordination of artistic and scientific critical weapons must lead to a total denunciation of present conditioning.

All space is already occupied by the enemy who, not content with exercising his jurisdiction, has shaped even its elementary laws - its actual geometry - for his own purposes. The appearance of authentic urbanism will be signalled by the dislodging of those occupying forces from certain zones. They have to be flushed out, leaving behind a "decolonized" law-less area constituting the sort of POSITIVE VOID which up to now has only been produced - transiently - by the deliberate destruction or the inadvertent breakdown of the external riots; the New York blackout of 1965; the Powis Square affair, London; Berkeley students takeover of waste ground (1969). What we call "construction" starts there, with the commandeering of a few parcels of land from this completely domesticated plant.

7

The functional is the practical. The only thing which is practical is the resolution of our fundamental problem - our own self-fulfilment, our escape from the system of isolation. This and nothing else is the useful and the utilitarian. All the rest are simply minor sub-products of the practical - and its mystification.

8

The situationist destruction of contemporary conditioning is at the same time the construction of situations: the liberation of the boundless energy tapped in a petrified everyday life. With the advent of unitary urbanism, contemporary city planning will be replaced by techniques for defending the permanently threatened conditions of liberty. Its inception will date from the moment when individuals (who, as such, do not yet exist) begin constructing their own lives and making their own history.

9

The prehistory of conditioning is coming to an end. We are not saying that men must return to some stage before conditioning began, but that they must master it, exploit it and play with it. A new architecture demands the revolution of everyday life - which means the appropriation of the means of conditioning by everyone, the unending enrichment of those means, and their fulfilment.

KOTANYI & VANEIGEM
1961

⊕

"On every Sunday since mid-April, hundreds of young people students and the hippie style 'street people' who made up Berkeley's peculiar youth sub-culture toiled over the desolate field. They took up a collection for sods, shrubs & seedlings. They covered most of the mud with grass & planted a grove of 3 trees. Some of the volunteers laid a brick walkway; others tilled a "revolutionary cornfield"; still others, with rented welding equipment, built swings & a sandbox for children, at one corner, a fishpond was dug. In the evening chill, a fire blazed in a central pit and young people ladled free soup from a garbage can. They called it the Peoples Park; architectural critic Alan Temko called it recreational design's most significant innovation since the great 19th c. public parks." - Newsweek.

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