

## A Brief History of the Italian Section of the Situationist International<sup>1</sup>

The crisis of post-war bourgeois society started at the beginning of the 1960s in the United States and then appeared in Europe, even reaching the Eastern countries. A profound change was taking place in the nature of capitalism and the classes: an economy of penury was becoming an economy of waste; the formal domination that had been based on the control over the work market was becoming a real domination based on the commodification of all aspects of life or, in sociological terms, on the generalization of mass consumption. On one side, the traditional sector of the proletariat, equipped with a certain technical and political education and with a certain control over the productive processes, remained caught in partisan structures and bureaucratized unions, which pushed it towards passivity and conservatism. On the other side, the new proletariat, the “working masses,” product of recent industrial production and economic expansion, that is to say, the preponderance of science in the productive process, without traditions or skills, pure peonage without any ties to the interests of mass production, threatened the dominant position of the official proletarian sector as an emerging political and social subject.

The revolt against colonized everyday life was at the heart of the social question, which was posed inside and outside of the factories as a questioning of each one of the aspects of “advanced” capitalist domination, as the rejection of work and consumption, as desertion from politics and [governmental] institutions. The element of subjective affirmation was so strong that it acted in an unforeseen fashion in the struggles; it principally made itself known through its criminal side,

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distinguishing itself within the growing protest movement as much by its negative and destructive aspect as by its spontaneous, disordered and vital character. In Italy's factories, young people rejected the work ethic, sabotaged assembly lines, disobeyed their union "leaders" and held open assemblies. The confrontations of the workers at FIAT with the police and the Stalinists<sup>2</sup> at the Piazza Statuto in Torino in 1962 provided the signal for the beginning of new class struggles that the ICP and the *Confederazione Generale Italiana di Lavoro*<sup>3</sup> strove to rein in and repress over the course of several years. A breach had opened upon the surface of consumer society, then at its first stages, in the grey zone of the "youth" who went to school (most of them anyway).

The youth was especially sensitive to the bankruptcy of traditional bourgeois values, a bankruptcy that first appeared in the form of a generational problem limited to the field of culture. Gianfranco Sanguinetti<sup>4</sup> and Marco Maria Sigiani<sup>5</sup> were too young men new to literary quarrels who, in June 1966, went to La Spezia during the fourth meeting of *Gruppo 63*, a movement made up of writers, poets and critics who were dedicated to the renewal of Italian literature by breaking with the academic framework of post-war neo-Realism by means of suppressing rules and experimenting with language. But the spirit of anti-authoritarianism and rupture overflowed the literary field and entered Italian youth, pushing it towards contestation. In the country's principal towns, groups of young people emerged and, inspired by the American counter-culture or the Dutch Provos,<sup>6</sup> questioned the moral and social bases of the established order, that is to say, the family, the

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<sup>2</sup> The members of the Italian Communist Party (ICP).

<sup>3</sup> General Confederation of Italian Workers.

<sup>4</sup> Born in 1948, Sanguinetti was 18 years old at the time. His background was extraordinary: his father, Bruno Sanguinetti, was a wealthy businessman, a Communist, a Jew, and an anti-fascist during World War II, while his mother, Teresa Mattei, was a famous WWII anti-fascist, a Communist and a politician.

<sup>5</sup> A co-founder of *Frankenstein*, a journal about technology (1972). Currently runs a blog: <http://marcomariasigiani.blogspot.com/>.

<sup>6</sup> Founded by Robert Jasper Grootveld, the Provos were active between 1965 and 1967.

school system, religion and sexual taboos, the army, the judiciary, the press, traditional politics . . . and declared themselves to be pacifistic and anti-militarist. Sensing the atmosphere of the times, after long discussions, Sigiani and Sanguinetti formed *Onda Verde* (“Green Wave”) in November 1966 with Antonio Pilati, Andrea Valcarengi, Marco Daniele, Felice Accame and other readers of Kerouac, who had visited Milan the previous month.<sup>7</sup> This was an open grouping of young intellectuals and *capelloni*<sup>8</sup> who, in Sanguinetti’s words, wanted to take on “the problems that directly concern the new generation” by using the Provos’ methods: “To play and desacralize, to provoke and propose.” The name came from the [Italian] translation of “*Green Wave*,”<sup>9</sup> the American pacifist movement to which Joan Baez belonged.<sup>10</sup> Their ideology, if they had one, was a vague youthism. According to one of their manifestoes,

*Onda Verde* proposes nothing other than what the youth propose. This might be too little or too much, but it is necessary. No violence. Resistance to war. Rejection of words without meaning. Rejection of the ideologies that only exist for the already-existing interests that support them.

In December, *Onda Verde* linked up with another, similar group, “Mondo Beat,” proving their imagination at little demonstrations and symbolic and ludic acts of the *happening*<sup>11</sup> or Living Theater type, accompanied by the libertarians of the “Sacco and Vanzetti” circle, who

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<sup>7</sup> Jack Kerouac (1922-1969) was an American author and, in the 1950s, a member of the rebellious “Beat Generation.” But by November 1966, he was no longer a rebel; in fact, he’d turned against the counter-culture, which he denounced for its communism, lack of patriotism, subversion, etc.

<sup>8</sup> Italian in original: “longhairs.”

<sup>9</sup> English in original.

<sup>10</sup> In point of fact, “Green Wave” was not a movement of any kind, but simply the title of a recording by Ms. Baez released in 1965.

<sup>11</sup> English in original.

loaned their mimeograph machine; by modern *freaks*,<sup>12</sup> eccentric *hippies*<sup>13</sup> with or without long hair; and, to finish up, by members of Pannella's *Partito Radicale*, in the process of being re-founded, who gave them offices. The influence of the PR is visible in the demands made in the *Manifestino della Base*, which was well distributed in the high schools in March 1967. This manifesto included generic statements that said "No to war" and measures that were politically impossible within the rigid system in place, such as revision of the laws concerning minors, the abolition of military service, the disarmament of the police, and full juridical freedom in sexual relations (abortion, divorce, homosexuality, etc.). The most characteristic aspect of this Milanese, juvenile agitation in the style of the Provos was its call "to occupy the spaces left vacant in the high schools due to the absence of a really incisive student movement detached from the partisan [political] sects" ("The Provocative Methodology of *Onda Verde*"). They sought a specific terrain of action so as to develop themselves upon it. The open trials of several activists, the denigrating articles in the *Corriere della Sera* and the police's destruction of the free camp space on the Via Ripamonti clearly demonstrated the impossibility of a tranquil contestation and a peaceful road for the imagination. The old bourgeoisie, attached to Catholic and fascist morality, was surprised by these unexpected protesters and responded with repression.

After the summer [of 1967], the juvenile movement modeled on the "Beats" entered into a phase of recuperation. A student at the traditional high school *Giovani Berchet*, as were some of his friends, Sanguinetti protested against the publication of the last issue of *Mondo Beat* by the Feltrinelli publishing house<sup>14</sup> by taking part in the journal *Stampa Libera* (one issue published in September), in which he,

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<sup>12</sup> English in original.

<sup>13</sup> English in original.

<sup>14</sup> Founded in 1954 by Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, scion of a very wealthy family, a highly visible "revolutionary" and a longtime member of the Italian Communist Party. This hostility to Feltrinelli would be continued by the situationists. Cf. <http://www.notbored.org/feltrinelli.html> and <http://www.notbored.org/debord-9December1971.html>.

Umberto Tiboni and Sigiani signed an article that rejected all the ideologies and emphasized the importance of the provocative method when faced with the repressive dynamic imposed by society. The agitation became university-wide. On 15 September, a meeting of activists took place in Tuscany: it concerned youth politics on diverse levels. It ended with the adoption of the *Carta di Valfurva*, written in July by Sanguinetti and Sigiani.<sup>15</sup> In it, they considered the death of the Beat and Provo movements as an advance for “youth power.” Those who made the greatest efforts to leave fashion aside and prevent the crystallization of a self-complacent juvenile milieu – a ghetto, one would say today – that was exposed to all kinds of manipulations, made a qualitative leap thanks to reading the situationists.<sup>16</sup> In October, the Provo Sanguinetti, his colleagues Accame and Sigiani (in his first year of philosophy), Claudio Pavan and Paolo Salvadori, both from the Berchet high school, took part in the creation of a new project directed by professor Carlo Oliva, a modernist intellectual in the Milanese movement and a sympathizer with the PR. That project was the journal *S*. This publication presented a new character, because, even if it reiterated the most radical cultural positions that had already been enunciated, it inserted them within demands for “a pro-youth politics” or for the harder hitting “student power.” The journal was intended to make “a creative and innovative use of original Marxism,” criticizing the spectacle of politics and the harmful effects of consumerism. The publication of *S* was followed by the victory of the “situationist” team as delegates from Berchet and the beginning of a vast student movement (in 1967, there were a half-million students in Italy), which favored its wide distribution. Issue #2 of *S* arrived at the universities in December. It spoke of “a lack of culture for the youth,”<sup>17</sup> the wearing of smocks by

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<sup>15</sup> Published 31 December 1968 and reprinted in Simonetti, . . . *ma l'amor mio non muore* (Rome: Castelvechi, 1997).

<sup>16</sup> Founded in Italy in 1958, the Situationist International (SI) was infamous for its role in the scandal circa November 1966 at the University of Strasbourg, where the pamphlet *On the Poverty of Student* was originally published.

<sup>17</sup> *decultura para los jóvenes* in the Spanish original and *déiculture pour les jeunes* in Trinidad Seoane's French translation.

college students, the proper use of the family, and the false language of the leaders. In its editorial in the third issue, the group made it clear that *S*-ism and “situationism,” as they liked to call it, “isn’t the avant-garde of the young proletariat, but the entirety of all the young people who decide to act in relation with the social mechanism, having as their common basis a collective and specific program.”

Their guerilla program, nevertheless, could be summarized as student control of the teaching system, the creation of a “cartel” of young people that would intervene in politics, the formation of workers’ and students’ organizations, and other reforms of the same type. Significantly, the first page contained an article that reviewed the youth movement, bringing to an end an entire stage, whose title offered no doubt as to its origins: “On the poverty of young people, considered in its political, economic, psychological and mental aspects, and some means to remedy it.” Young people were part of “a new proletariat kept on the margins until the moment that it [the bourgeoisie] wants to use it for its own ends.” Nevertheless, in the supplement to issue #3, the *S*-ists marked their distance from the *On the Poverty of Student Life* pamphlet. On the one hand, they objected to Hegelian-Marxist methodology because they believed that it opened the door to ideology; on the other hand, they rejected the “myth of the worker,” and consequently, the function of the Workers’ Councils. Likewise, they posed the question of the role of technology. At that time, the editorial board, which had tripled in size, decided to dissolve. Success had increased divergences within the heart of the group and the coherence demanded by situationist theory brought about the definitive blow. During this time, the limited young people’s movement was located in a vaster movement, the product of the [school] occupations.

The student movement had begun in Torino in November 1967 with the occupation of the university and had extended itself rapidly to the principal towns until March 1968, when the high schools took up the baton. At the end of January [1968], the Berchet school was one of the first to be occupied by its students. The limits were quickly reached: the students couldn’t critique the study plans without critiquing the role of instruction and the class society into which it was inscribed; nor could

they question university life without questioning their own alienated lives. In sum, the student was split between the approval of the destiny for which he or she prepared – assuming his or her social function in the system – and the desire to deny his or her own condition. All of the dominant values began to be put into question and, along with this, the institutions that promoted them, from the family to the State. Unavoidably, the self-proclaimed leaders, the Catholics and the Stalinists, tended to soften the contradictions by drawing the movement into the impasse of the academic and pseudo-democratic spectacle of protest, but this meant little because the crisis entered the terrain of work: Pirelli, FIAT, Montedison, Saint Gobain . . . . Under the pretext of imposing favorable salary negotiations, many autonomous wildcat strikes broke out in March, accompanied by sabotage, street fighting, looting, etc. The French revolt of May 68 completed the climate in which hierarchy, work, all social conventions and the very status of being of a worker were violently rejected. The appearance of a wildcat workers' movement, determined to resolve its problems with increasingly significant protests, was the determinant factor. In less than a year, Italy became the center of the European social crisis.

The first nuclei of the radical current came from the student occupations: they were especially influenced by situationist critique because the theoretical work of the SI was the only one that, in a deep way, had apprehended the real content of the [recent] revolts and, in addition, had offered a coherent and total and vision of the new era, [that is to say] the return of the social revolution. Joe Fallisi,<sup>18</sup> one of the protagonists, explained, “We were not situationists; we knew and developed a certain mode of thought whose essential contribution in France had been made by the situationists.” Though *la Francia indica la strada*,<sup>19</sup> as one said at the time, the diffusion of these theories was quite limited. One year previously, Feltrinelli had published [an Italian

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<sup>18</sup> Giuseppe Fallisi, an anarchist, singer and songwriter.

<sup>19</sup> Italian for “France shows the way.”

translation of] *On the Poverty of Student Life*,<sup>20</sup> which was soon after out-of-print; De Donato had published a bad translation of [Guy Debord's book] *The Society of the Spectacle* and an even worse translation of [Raoul Vaneigem's essay] "Basic Banalities"<sup>21</sup> – and that was all there was [in Italian] until the end of 1968, when a collection of essays (including [Debord's] "Decline and Fall of the Spectacular-Commodity Economy") titled *The Coherent Extremism of the Situationists*<sup>22</sup> was published by 912, a publishing house founded by Gianni Sassi, Sergio Albergoni and Gianni-Emilio Simonetti to promote and distribute works by young avant-garde artists, in particular, the Fluxus group. But after May 68, when art (avant-garde or not) was considered to be a bourgeois cadaver, 912 was led by a *Servizio Internazionale di Collegamento*.<sup>23</sup> This service was composed of Marco Sigiani, Antonio Pilati, Palo Boro (former members of *Onda Verde*) and several others who, hoping to obtain a situationist franchise in Italy,<sup>24</sup> had locked into a relationship [*habían trabado relaciones*] with the SI.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Guy Debord's letter to Daniela Marin dated 3 January 1968: <http://www.notbored.org/debord-3January1968.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. the SI's collective letter to De Donato dated 4 June 1969: <http://www.notbored.org/debord-4June1969.html>.

<sup>22</sup> *L'Estremismo coerente dei situazionisti*, Milan, November 1968. But see the violent denunciation of this book issued by the Italian section of the SI in July 1969, "Touched By Enemy Hands, the Gold of the International Turns to Coal": <http://www.notbored.org/touched.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Italian for the "International Link Service."

<sup>24</sup> There hadn't been any Italian members, no "Italian Section," of the SI between 1960 and late 1968.

<sup>25</sup> It is unlikely – there is no evidence (no letters sent by Guy Debord, for example) to support the idea – that that *anyone*, much less a pro-situ grouping formed in the aftermath of May 1968, *when such groups were a dime a dozen*, would have been able or had actually been able to "lock" or "tie together" "relations" or "a relationship" with the SI. Cf. the aforementioned text "Touched By Enemy Hands, the Gold of the International Turns to Coal"

<http://www.notbored.org/touched.html>, as well as Guy Debord's letter to Gianfranco Sanguinetti dated 22 January 1969: <http://www.notbored.org/debord-22January1969.html>.

The majority of Italian radicals had purchased their copies of the situ books or the journal *Internationale Situationniste* during travels in France, which were especially frequent after May, but, in the final analysis, at the end of the year this journal had only twenty subscribers in all of Italy. If one compares the very limited knowledge of situationist analysis with its impact at the time, one will see that the subversive capacity [*rendimiento subversivo*] of the SI was formidable.

The critique of everyday life occupied the center of social critique; the bureaucracies of the political parties and the unions were condemned; militancy was rejected, as was sexual repression and the sense of sacrifice. One spoke of the right of assembly, of direct action,<sup>26</sup> of generalized self-management, and of Workers' Councils; one critiqued Stalinist totalitarianism and State capitalism, be it Soviet or Chinese; one rediscovered the history of the workers' movement, its bureaucratic degeneration, the counter-revolutionary role of the Bolsheviks. One reviewed anarcho-syndicalism, the Spanish Revolution, the repression at Krontstadt and the repression of the *Mahknovshchina*, the IWW, etc. This radical current set juvenile anarchism in opposition to the old libertarian movement, which was stiff, immobile, indifferent to events and changes, and satisfied with its "democratic" role in the system. This current had overcome the opposition between Marxism and anarchism: revolutionary Marxism no longer had anything to do with the Leninism and Stalinism of the ICP and the other, much smaller political groupings, and revolutionary anarchism had nothing to do with the FAI, the GAF or *Umanita Nuova*.<sup>27</sup> The overcoming of this opposition came from a reconciliation between the Marxist critique of political economy and the Bakuninian critique of the State and politics. With the exception of a few, who were schooled in heterodox Italian Marxism (the Genoese Rosa Luxembourg Circle, the *Classe Operaia*<sup>28</sup> journal), the radicals

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<sup>26</sup> For its part, the SI never spoke of "direct action." This is important because of the formation of a violent and militant French group called *Action directe*, which was highly critical of Guy Debord in the decades after the dissolution of the SI.

<sup>27</sup> The Italian Anarchist Federation, the Federated Anarchist Groups, and the main Italian anarchist publication, respectively.

<sup>28</sup> Italian for "working class."

were very young, inexperienced, learning and living at great speed; their vital subjectivity, the still-new assimilation of situationist works and the dominant activist ideology of spontaneity did not favor unified collective reflection and did not stimulate a theoretical creativity at the level that the SI required of autonomous groups – with the exception of the Sanguinetti group that had come from *S*. These were honored students of subversion, because, in the fall of 1968, they produced “Dialectic of Putrefaction and Supersession,”<sup>29</sup> an excellent analysis of the student movement. Then there was a meeting between the radical nuclei of Milan, namely, Sanguinetti’s group; the anarchist renovators of the F.A.G.I.<sup>30</sup> such as Joe Fallisi and “Pinki” Gallieri; the publishers at Il Gatto Selvaggio, such as Eddy Ginosa, partisans of a critical recasting of councilist theses; and, finally, isolated individuals such as Giorgio Cesarano, who recognized himself in sketched out theoretical perspectives. They took the name “Council Communists,” under which they signed several pages in December, one of which denounced the schizophrenic Stalinism of the Maoists and was titled “The Explosion Point of the Bureaucratic Lie.”<sup>31</sup>

Salvadori, Sanguinetti, and Pavan visited the situationists at the end of 1968.<sup>32</sup> Their preparation and their intelligence made a good impression, and this is why the SI connected better with them than with the young people of the already-defunct publishing house *912*, who were, in the final analysis, simple importers of protest fashions. Consequently, relations with Sigiani’s group were interrupted, to their

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<sup>29</sup> “Dialettica Della Putrefazione e Del Superamento” would be eventually published in *Internazionale Situazionista* #1 (July 1969).

<sup>30</sup> The *Federazione Anarchica Giovanile Italiana* (“Young Italian Anarchist Federation”).

<sup>31</sup> A play on the title of an essay by Guy Debord: “The Explosion Point of Ideology in China,” *Internationale situationniste* #11, October 1967.

<sup>32</sup> Compare with Debord’s letter to Sanguinetti dated 19 January 1969, which states, “We have briefly met the two other friends of your group, along with Paolo,” but, according to the footnotes supplied by Alice Becker-Ho/Librairie Artheme Fayard, the “two other friends” are Cristina Sensenhauser and Puni Cesoni: <http://www.notbored.org/debord-19January1969.html>.

great displeasure. They discredited themselves by writing a defamatory letter against their imaginary competitors. The three future members of the Italian section settled their accounts with them in the first issue of *Internazionale Situazionista*, although one doesn't see why Simonetti, the supreme pro-situ, wasn't included in the lot.

In France, the social crisis had continued, and one had to find a new, more demanding organizational approach. In April 1968, Debord had elaborated a document on organization, "The Question of Organization for the SI," also known as "The April Theses," which the course of events had set aside; nevertheless, the dissolution of the Council for Maintaining the Occupations (CMDO) led to the reprise of the debate about organization by the situationists and a return to the "Theses." This document proclaimed the autonomy of the sections [of the SI], correcting the error committed with the English section, and the possibility of the formation of tendencies [within the SI]. The "Theses" served as the basis for the foundation of the American section and they then served this purpose for the Italians. The wager of a deliberately limited group of theoreticians, all in conformity with a central basis, the "Minimum Definition of Revolutionary Organizations," along with a great collective mastery of expression and method, in sum, a proven equality of abilities [on the part of the various members], took precedence over any other organizational alternative. Debord had advised, "choose a higher group-level instead of abstract camaraderie." It was thus that the two close comrades who, accompanied by Salvadori, met with the SI in Paris in January 1969 – Francesco "Puni" Cesoni and Cristina Massili – were not admitted into the section due to insufficient education: "It is the historical stage of your activity that has changed, and thus they, without moving, have moved away" (Debord).<sup>33</sup> The act of strengthening the ranks was a good opportunity to distinguish pseudo-situationist groups, such as Sigiani's or the group centered around

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<sup>33</sup> These quotes are from Debord's letter to the Italian Section of the SI dated 7 February 1969: <http://www.notbored.org/debord-7February1969.html>.

Pasquale Alferj,<sup>34</sup> who, trying to pass for very modern, published a pamphlet in Trento that was confected out of phrases taken from [Vaneigem's] *Traité de savoir-vivre*<sup>35</sup> and abusively attributed to the "SI." But perhaps the SI wasn't really interested in finding allies, because it delegated the responsibility for all contacts in Italy to the three men from Milan and, consequently, set itself in opposition to the least relations with [other] radical people and groups in the country.

The constitution of the Italian section – the second one – began with a debate on the question of organization. Although the SI had been founded in Italy and had included the important figure of Pinot-Gallizio,<sup>36</sup> the first Italian section was quickly liquidated during the internal struggles against artistic tendencies, and there remained no trace of it. Relations with Italy were only renewed in December 1966<sup>37</sup> when a Roman professor named Mario Perniola, disenchanted with Surrealism, wrote a pro-situationist article, "*Arte e rivoluzione*," for the journal *Tempo Presente*. For a while, Perniola played the [twin] roles of the SI's distributor and correspondent in Italy. After the May revolt, he went to Brussels and Paris to meet with Debord and the others in order to study the manner of their intervening in the Italian crisis. He had been working on statutes that were in contradiction with the "April Theses" and the avant-gardism of the SI. Perniola proposed an expanded councilist organization, a kind of federation of independent affinity groups, without the egalitarian demands and restrictions of a group of theoreticians. This recalled the CMDO, the real value of which did not correspond to the glory that one attributed to it. Obviously, such an organization went against the very nature of the SI: it did not guarantee the autonomy of its members and almost reduced the role of the SI as an organization to almost nothing. Debord believed that the problem of

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Debord's letter to the Italian section dated 21 February 1969:

<http://www.notbored.org/debord-21February1969.html>.

<sup>35</sup> Best known in English as *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, first published in French in 1967.

<sup>36</sup> Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio (1902-1964) was a painter and co-founder of the SI.

<sup>37</sup> See Debord's letter to Perniola dated 26 December 1966:

<http://www.notbored.org/debord-26December1966a.html>.

organization was, in principle, a technical one<sup>38</sup> and had to be posed on the basis of what the SI really was and not as a function of an organizational ideal. For the occasion, Debord prepared a counter-proposition<sup>39</sup> that the situationists approved unanimously. Starting from then – March 1969 – there was no other Italian section that the one composed by the three guys from Milan, while Perniola was placed on the back burner and considered to be an “external sympathizer.”<sup>40</sup> Although there was an agreement to continue the debate, Perniola’s “extreme federalist” position was incompatible with that of the situationists, not to mention his theoretical weaknesses (for example, his ignorance of the works of Hegel). The misadventure of this position was only a chronicle of an anticipated break. Faced with the indiscriminate acceptance of any old contact based upon simple [mutual] interest, without guarantees, Debord looped the loop and set himself against any collaboration with radicals who were sympathetic with the SI or nearly so. As for Perniola, he also made a decision and rejected the Hegelian-Marxist dialectic, and proposed a return to Plato’s dialectic. At that time, Debord wrote to the Italian section: “We cannot envision discussions, exchanges of information or limited collective actions with the *autonomous revolutionary groups*, whose basic revolutionary value we recognize, that is to say, those in Italy whom *you* will judge for yourselves.”<sup>41</sup> The Italians ended the affair by addressing a “Memorandum” (May 1969) to Perniola that definitively consummated the break by accusing him of maneuvers and positioning him as hostile [to the SI]. The SI approved this text and there was no longer anything more to discuss. Later on (in October), Perniola participated in the

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<sup>38</sup> See Debord’s letter to the Italian section dated 12 March 1969:

<http://www.notbored.org/debord-12March1969.html>.

<sup>39</sup> See Debord’s letter to Perniola dated 6 April 1969:

<http://www.notbored.org/debord-6April1969.html>.

<sup>40</sup> It would appear from Debord’s letter to Sanguinetti dated 13 March 1969 that it was Perniola himself, not Debord or the SI, who defined him as an “external sympathizer”: <http://www.notbored.org/debord-13March1969.html>.

<sup>41</sup> Guy Debord, letter to the Italian section of the SI, dated 7 May 1969; not yet translated into English.

creation of a national councilist organization that, over the course of around a year, included the majority of Italian radicals, under the name “Ludd” or “Ludd-Council Proletarians.”

At the end of July [1969], the Italian section published issue #1 of its journal, *Internazionale Situazionista*, which far exceeded expectations. The theoretical level was elevated and the treatment of the Italian crisis was exhaustive and lucid. The concept of the totality, so dear to situationist critique, was pertinently applied. Debord was impressed: “I believe that no one has written anything so strong in Italy since Machiavelli.”<sup>42</sup> Italy had the peculiarity of possessing the biggest Communist party in the West, one that was flanked by the most fanatical Maoist groups, which meant that a revolutionary movement could only arise on the theoretical and practical ruins of both the Stalinists and the Maoists. They represented all that the revolution had to sweep away: State bureaucratic capitalism; political totalitarianism; the sectarian mentality; the annihilation of the individual; the permanent exploitation of the workers in the name of socialism; class domination disguised by the party in power. . . . Moreover, the Maoists distinguished themselves with their aggressive public-order services, which were devoted to the systematic pursuit of anarchists and radicals. In Italy, the critique of Stalinist ideology in both its pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese varieties was, more than anywhere, the condition for all critique, and the journal [*Internazionale Situazionista*] accomplished this task in an impeccable fashion. The theoretical work was completed by [the inclusion of] translations of excerpts from *Traité de savoir-vivre, Enragés and Situationists in the Occupations Movement*,<sup>43</sup> and the principal articles from the French journal,<sup>44</sup> in the name of which contacts had been

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<sup>42</sup> Guy Debord, letter to Sanguinetti, dated 3 August 1969; not yet translated.

<sup>43</sup> Created to René Viénet alone, but actually written by Viénet, Debord, Vaneigem, Mustapha Khayati and René Riesel, and published by Gallimard in 1968.

<sup>44</sup> Also included were “The Beginning of an Era,” which had not yet been published in France (it would be the centerpiece of *Internationale Situationniste* #12), and an Italian translation of Guy Debord’s “The Proletariat as Subject and As Representation,” from *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967).

established with the publishers Sugar and Silva. At the end of summer 1969, the Venezuelan revolutionary Eduardo Rothe, former member of the CMDO, left for Milan to reinforce the section. In September, the [eighth] conference of the SI was held in Venice in a triumphal atmosphere.<sup>45</sup> Number 12 of the review [of the French section, *Internationale Situationniste*] was published shortly afterwards.

All through 1969, the class struggle grew a little everywhere.<sup>46</sup> Anti-union wildcat strikes at FIAT, Pirelli, Oficina 32 de Mirafiori and RAI; barricades in Milan, Caserta, Torino and Naples; revolts in the prisons; the creation of base committees in the factories; insurrection at Battipaglia; riots in Sardinia; incidents, confrontations, occupations, arson, etc. Any pretext was good to demonstrate, sabotage or occupy, thus involving the unions despite themselves, obligated as they were to participate or be set aside. A general strike was set for 19 November and, on that day, the Italian section posted in the streets of Milan a manifesto that summarized the situation and explained the real meaning of the workers' struggles, indicated the successes of the movement and called for the formation of Workers' Councils. This manifesto was titled "Address to the Italian proletariat on the Current Possibilities for Social Revolution,"<sup>47</sup> the culminating point of the subversive work of the Italian section. Italy was one step from general insurrection. In a few weeks, faced with the irremediable inefficiency of the police and the

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<sup>45</sup> Contrast this depiction of the mood of the SI's conference with the one offered by Debord in "Notes to serve towards the history of the SI from 1969 to 1971," *The Real Split in the International*, trans. John McHale: "The eighth SI Conference was held in [...] a very well-chosen building in the working-class district of la Guidecca. [The proceedings] were constantly surrounded and monitored by a larger number of informers of either the home-grown variety or else delegated by foreign police bodies. [...] Whereas a few comrades followed Vaneigem in maintaining a judicious silence throughout, half the participants spent three-quarters of the time restating in the strongest possible terms whatever the speaker before him had just come out with in the way of the same vague generalities."

<sup>46</sup> Compare this summary of the events of 1969 with the one presented by Censor/Sanguinetti in Chapter II of the *Truthful Report on the Last Chances to Save Capitalism in Italy*: <http://www.notbored.org/censorIII.html>.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. our translation: <http://www.notbored.org/avviso.pdf>.

unions, any social conflict could serve as the spark that led to a situation beyond return. The Italian State was getting weaker by the moment and the dominant class felt besieged and disposed to resist to the very end. The workers' bureaucracy recommended a politics of unity with it in order to struggle against the revolution, but its pacifying efficiency was in free fall. If the workers decided to take up arms, it would be impossible to avoid a civil war. The highest leadership cadres rejected an economic or political solution to the crisis;<sup>48</sup> among them, the military option had supporters, [and] this is why the secret services were brought in to infiltrate the little political groups and organizations to prepare a bloody counter-attack. This counter-attack began with a diversionary tactic, an incomprehensible and gratuitous attack that would produce innocent victims, with the objective of traumatizing public opinion and disorienting the proletariat, even if momentarily, paralyzing its activity and its increasing awareness. The Stalinists, the forces of law and order, and the judiciary would take care of the rest. On 12 December, a bomb exploded at the Piazza Fontana in Milan. The police, the political parties and the media blamed the attack on anarchists. The fix was in. Eduardo [Rothe] and Puni [Cesoni] were the first to denounce the maneuver in the tract "Is the Reichstag Burning?"<sup>49</sup> which was pasted to the walls at the Piazza Fontana and the gates of the principal factories in Milan on 19 December. Two weeks later, the Ludd group distributed another tract, "Bomb, Blood, Capital," principally written by Eddy Ginosa, who was arrested in the police raid that followed the explosion and freed several days later. These two texts were the only denunciations of State terrorism that were contemporary with the deeds in question.

Until October, the Italian section had been shielded from the symptoms of the crisis in the French section, which was initiated by Debord's decision, announced in July, to step down as editor of the

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<sup>48</sup> Except for the partisans of the "historic compromise" with the ICP, Aldo Moro, among them.

<sup>49</sup> See our translation: <http://www.notbored.org/reichstag.html>.

journal.<sup>50</sup> There was a creative paralysis, a worrisome absence of debate and activity that, in any case, did not soften the conviction of belonging to the elite of the global revolution.<sup>51</sup> Neither the expulsion of [Alain] Chevalier<sup>52</sup> nor the Venice Conference settled these things. One had to function in another way, to find new terrains of action in the factories, to seek out people active in the workers' revolts, but, instead of that, the American section entered into crisis in November. At the same time, the Italian section, which appeared exemplary, began to show fissures. In a letter addressed to Eduardo, Debord emphasized the excessive rigidity of the personal relations between the members of the section and expressed the necessity of relaxing them so that there could be "a veritable homogenous community in the entirety of the SI."<sup>53</sup> This rigidity was visible in a "Resolution on Organic Practice" by means of which the Italians aspired to a degree of personal standards that were superior to those that formally prevailed in the SI, which were already quite elevated. Their rule for exclusions foresaw the possibility that a single situationist might pronounce one. Debord wondered if this point had been formulated with the specific idea of applying it in the near future. If the weakness of the French section consisted of being in agreement about everything, the Italians' weakness was the opposite: the section discussed too much, any problem whatsoever was transposed into a theoretical one without good reason, and it ended up that any theoretical question resulted in an infinite number of nuances that led to irrational disputes. According to Eduardo Rothe, the meetings were more and

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. Debord's letter to the SI dated 28 July 1969:  
<http://www.notbored.org/debord-28July1969.html>.

<sup>51</sup> Whatever the merits of this diagnosis of the internal problems of the SI in 1969 (we think it has few), it can certainly be faulted with presenting the nature of "the crisis" as the same in all three of the SI's principal sections (French, Italian and American), when each "crisis" had its own distinctive features and causes. If there *was* a central theme in these crises, it was the paradoxical success of May 1968, not the internal problems of the French editorial board.

<sup>52</sup> On 3 October 1969: <http://www.notbored.org/debord-3October1969.html>.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Debord's letter to Eduardo Rothe dated 8 November 1969:  
<http://www.notbored.org/debord-8November1969.html>.

more irritating and dull; the principal person responsible being Salvadori, an assiduous philosophy student. Rothe's first confrontation with him concerned the subject of the translation of a phrase ("there are hardly any doubts" instead of "there is no doubtful case").<sup>54</sup> In an intolerably professorial tone, Salvadori began to go on a wild-goose chase, speculating quite seriously on the possible causes of this lapse, with each new cause more delirious than the prior one. The problem wasn't considered to be serious; it simply revealed "a bad practice of theory," a recourse to theory when it wasn't necessary, but, other than this, one began to reproach Sanguinetti for his absences and a certain scornful attitude towards his companions. There was a tension in the Italian section that didn't cease to grow, resulting in a closed, almost familial coexistence. The section was far from having set the first stone of the program so valiantly enunciated in its journal: "Neglect nothing that could serve to unify and radicalize dispersed struggles, to federate autonomous groups and communities of individuals in open rebellion who experiment *in practice* with the forms of organization of revolutionary proletarians." Obviously, one writes better about a struggle if one is part of it. But the problems with communicating with [people involved in] real struggles – a consequence of the "group of theoreticians" option and the rejection of sympathizers – reduced the radicalism of the section to mere phrases and led it to concentrate upon individual relations. The "April Theses" had no adherents in the section: "We cannot recognize as autonomous a group that has no independent means of practical work; nor can we recognize the lasting success of an autonomous group without united action with the workers. . . ." Debord foresaw the problem and, in the wake of a text by Eddy Ginosa titled

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<sup>54</sup> It should be noted that, pedantic or not, Salvadori was skilled at translating French into Italian and, over the course of the 1970s (that is to say, for years after the dissolution of the SI), Debord relied upon him to translate his works into Italian. Cf. for example: <http://www.notbored.org/debord-16April1973.html> and <http://www.notbored.org/debord-3July1978.html>. Note as well that, in the aftermath of the assassination of Gérard Lebovici in March 1984, Debord and Salvadori renewed their relationship.

“Avevo per fine il movimento reale,”<sup>55</sup> proposed to Salvadori the possibility of the formation of a kind of CMDO between Ludd’s group in Milan and a handful of radical workers, leaving the initiative to them.<sup>56</sup> Debord also advised the modification of the principle of immediate breaks with the pro-situ followers who were capable of evolving and abandoning the incongruous organizations to which they belonged. Thus, it was agreed that Pavan should come to Paris at the end of December and explain the state of the Italian section to the French. That was when the bomb at the Piazza Fontana exploded, marked a turning point in the heart of the movement (even if Salvadori didn’t believe it), and allowed a strange law-and-order party formed by the police, the Leftists and the Stalinists of the ICP to regain position and isolate the radical minority in the factories and on the streets.

Pavan’s visit revealed the latent crisis in the Italian section, the personal problems, the unhealthy atmosphere that reigned, and the indifference with respect to the real situation, everything else being extremely preoccupying. On 17 January [1970] he attended a meeting with other situationists in Wolsfeld, a Rhineland village (Germany), and spoke about his resignation or a possible split in Italy. According to the delegates’ report drafted in Trier (Marx’s birthplace), Pavan, “evoking the interpersonal organizational difficulties and the real problems of the section, reported practical decisions taken to solve these problems and prevent their reappearance. In passing, he indicated the necessity of elaborating a theoretical-practical organic critique of the Italian section’s past activities.” In addition, he communicated to those present that the section was going to change its work program. To get out of the

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<sup>55</sup> “To have the real movement as goal,” which appears to be a play upon the title of Raoul Vaneigem’s essay, “Avoir pour but la vérité pratique” *Internationale Situationniste* #11 (October 1967).

<sup>56</sup> Letter dated 24 November 1969: “The tract of the pro-situ students is likable (perhaps with a mystified tendency to present the student as victim of over-exploitation?). I suppose that you are in contact with them. Perhaps they and the first workers encountered can form the nucleus of a sort of CMDO, if the circumstances soon require a more extended communal action.”

<http://www.notbored.org/debord-24November1969.html>.

impasse, Debord suggested that one or two new members join, and it seems that Eddy Giosa was approached, but that he rejected the offer, believing himself to be insufficiently prepared. An interview with Eduardo after the meeting in Wolsfeld and a confused letter from Pavan (dated 5 February), which revealed a worrisome ambience of suspicion and disloyalty among the members of the section, caused one to believe that the internal problems had arrived at a stage that an immediate clarification, and a split, if necessary, were called for. Towards this end, a tendency was formed within the SI by Debord, Rothe and Christian Sébastiani on 14 February, with the goal of clarifying the facts and acting in accordance with them.<sup>57</sup> In principle, the crisis could be summarized as the “problem of Gianfranco,” who was reproached for unjustified absences, repeated instances of imprudence, stinginess, falsified relations, lack of awareness and reprehensible conduct. Pavan’s letter confirmed the climate of diffuse hostility that reigned on the section, and Gianfranco’s lack of “savoir-vivre” and his inexact information, but, three days later, Pavan co-signed a letter by Gianfranco and Salvadori to the entirety of the SI that stated that things were getting better and that Sanguinetti’s only liability was his absence from certain meetings. Because his attitude, which was, at the very least, contradictory, had been harshly reproached by Debord and Sébastiani when he was in Paris, Pavan admitted his mistakes and presented his resignation (letter of 20 February). He then returned to Milan and avoided his companions. The SI didn’t accept such a frivolous resignation and decided to exclude him, thus contravening the principle of the autonomy of the sections, let us note in passing. Sanguinetti was cleansed of suspicions but one demanded of him that he remit six million lira to the organization (through familial inheritance, he possessed a certain fortune).<sup>58</sup> In March, Salvadori met with Debord and, in April, a collective meeting of the French and Italian sections was

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. documents dated 14 February 1970 <http://www.notbored.org/debord-14February1970.html> and 18 February 1970 <http://www.notbored.org/debord-18February1970.html>.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. document dated 11 March 1970: <http://www.notbored.org/debord-11March1970.html>.

held.<sup>59</sup> Believing things to be settled, the tendency of 14 February chose to dissolve. The problems between Eduardo and Paolo were resolved by an agreement to no longer dispute stupidities, but Eduardo reoffended with a provocative “I shit on the dialectic!” which sent Paolo into a mad rage. Rothe, knowing what awaited him, didn’t come to the collective meeting of 21 April between the French and Italian sections, and he left for Venezuela. The situationists penalized his digs at Salvadori by excluding him,<sup>60</sup> and, from Caracas, Eduardo sent a letter full of formal excuses; it concluded with an ironic, “Vive Eduardo!”<sup>61</sup>

Once the crisis of the Italian section was resolved, at least in appearance, the SI [as a whole] tried to resolve its essential problem – theoretical production, that is to say, the justification of its existence<sup>62</sup> – by opening an orientation debate<sup>63</sup> that had as its final, anti-avant-gardist

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. Debord’s letter to the SI dated 17 March 1970: <http://www.notbored.org/debord-17March1970.html>.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. document dated 21 April 1970: <http://www.notbored.org/debord-21April1970.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Not so ironic: his self-critique was accepted by Debord (cf. letter dated 19 November 1973 <http://www.notbored.org/debord-19November1973.html>), and, moving to Portugal, he went on to get involved in the events that were taking place there (cf. letter from Debord to Rothe dated 26 June 1974: <http://www.notbored.org/debord-26June1974.html>).

<sup>62</sup> Even if the SI once defined *its journal* as “the expression of an international group of theoreticians who, in the last few years, have undertaken a radical critique of modern society” (cf. the “Summary of 1965,” relayed by Debord to Salvadori on 9 December 1969, <http://www.notbored.org/debord-9December1969.html>), this doesn’t mean that *the SI itself* was a nothing more than a factory for “theoretical production” or a team of uninvolved or detached theoreticians. At every stage of its development, the SI not only produced theory but also knew how to diffuse and popularize that theory by causing a public scandal of some kind. The circumstances of the publication of *On the Poverty of Student Life* are the best example of this. Diffusion and popularization (putting up posters in places in which you are at risk of being arrested), scandal-creation: these are not the skills of mere theoreticians, but truly *practical* people.

<sup>63</sup> The author seems to have forgotten about Debord’s “April Theses,” which in fact “opened” the self-same “orientation debate” that, in the first few months of 1970, was being resumed.

objective “that the workers come to us and remain autonomous.”<sup>64</sup> At the same time, one began to plan the redaction of issue #13 of the French journal. Salvadori and Sanguinetti thoroughly participated in the [orientation] debate and elaborated their respective “provisional theses” and their “notes.”<sup>65</sup> They began to work on issue #2 of the [Italian] journal. Over time, they let go of Beaulieu, Khayati and Cheval for different reasons.<sup>66</sup> At the end of June, Debord, taking stock of the debate, was surprised by the unanimity of the contributions. He understood that they were in fact useless monologues that coincided, which was the sign of a theoretical fetish at work. “To declare that one doesn’t separate theory from practice, this isn’t yet practicing theory” (“Remarks on the SI,” 27 July 1970,<sup>67</sup> Debord, *Correspondance*, volume 4). A drastic change was necessary: “If, despite all its advantages, our method of organization has the unique weakness of not being real, it is obvious that we must we make it real immediately, or renounce it and define a different style of organization, either for a continuation of the SI or a regrouping on other bases.”<sup>68</sup> The SI stagnated and was incapable of going beyond generic affirmations that only repeated the conclusions of its previous stage. To declare that it was necessary to connect with the workers’ milieu did not mean that the contact was in fact made. This made rather obvious a compensatory psychological mechanism: confidence in an abstract proletariat, depository of radical essence, sheltered from discouragement, to which one need only communicate its own theory, a task that would be the job of a select group of theoreticians. Thus, Vaneigem’s formula, “the Strasbourg [scandal] of the factories,”<sup>69</sup> remained in the domain of good intentions,<sup>70</sup> and the

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. Debord’s “For the orientation debate of Spring 1970,” dated 27 April 1970: <http://www.notbored.org/orientation12.html>.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. <http://www.notbored.org/orientation-debate.html>.

<sup>66</sup> Each of these men (Francois de Beaulieu, Mustapha Khayati and Patrick Cheval) resigned from the SI: they weren’t excluded or “let go.”

<sup>67</sup> Cf. <http://www.notbored.org/orientation23.html>.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> “Notes on the SI’s Direction,” March 1970: <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/direction.html>.

proposition of “René-Donatien” (Viénet) for a “wildcat striker’s notebook”<sup>71</sup> didn’t get beyond the stage of an innocent pleasantry.

The same problems were taking place within the Ludd group. In an internal document, the group in Torino tried to explain them as a lack of adequation between theory and practice: “The theory is new and advanced [...] the praxis that corresponds to this theory must also be new and advanced [...] The fear of not being sufficiently radical will lead in practice to the same conclusions reached by the SI: the most radical act, the only one possible, consists of saying radical things.” But this wasn’t all. At the tactical level, one ignored the extreme weakness of the French groups born after May, the inexistence of councilist workers’ organizations, the easy success of the provocation in Italy, the phenomenon of revolutionary “fashion,” the demobilization brought about by the Communist parties, the intensification of the repression and other facts of the same type clearly indicated a regression of the proletarian movement,<sup>72</sup> a reflux simultaneously practical and theoretical that kept the SI isolated in its avant-garde role, which denied itself, or, better still, devoured itself. One was still looking towards the past, celebrating the victory [of May 1968], while the opportunity was silently slipping through one’s fingers and the capitalist State was recuperating the lost terrain. Against all odds, the social crisis in France and Italy was halted;<sup>73</sup> inevitably, the change of climate in the factories was reversible.

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<sup>70</sup> It didn’t stay there permanently. According to Sanguinetti, writing to Debord on 15 August 1978: “I can announce to [you] that the first Strasbourg scandal in the factories *has taken place* in Milan, with the greatest success imaginable, thanks to a group of situ workers.” <http://www.notbored.org/sanguinetti-15August1978.html>.

<sup>71</sup> In his “Notes for the meeting of 5 May 1970,” Viénet suggested the creation of “a wildcat striker’s notebook, which would lay out a quick history of a wildcat strike’s movement, confirming its more or less formulated analyses of the role of the unions, etc.” <http://www.notbored.org/orientation15.html>.

<sup>72</sup> If you watch his film *The Society of the Spectacle* (Simar Films, 1973), you will see what 1970 represented to Guy Debord: the proletarian uprisings in Poland.

<sup>73</sup> Though the bombing of the Piazza Fontana was *temporarily* successful in disorienting, intimidating and threatening the radical workers’ movement, it did not “halt” “the social crisis,” which either continued to smolder underneath the icy surface of the spectacle of terrorism and/or quickly flared up again in the early

The unification of the exploited class was only produced in moments of concrete offensive. The unions, far from disappearing, gained influence. Militancy, which Vaneigem called “the clownery of sacrifice,” was making a return, even among the radicals. Placed on the defensive, the more traditional proletariat preferred a realization of the economy on other bases (co-management, cooperatives, nationalization, union mediation), while the more advanced proletariat continued to want the abolition of the economy (the rejection of work, consumerism and unions). Given the power of the workerist bureaucracy in Italy, any advance by the radical workers led to a confrontation with their backwards companions, but there were no advances, only division and immobility. Elitist theorizing, the ideology of the everyday, the apology for criminality, the recourse to heroin, and the phenomenon of armed struggle were direct products of this quagmire.<sup>74</sup> To capture the new state of things and to critique the totality by giving oneself a terrain of concrete action, the SI needed a change in tactics, more oriented towards resistance and, probably, a new type of organization, not an avant-garde

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1970s. And this was precisely why the perpetrators of the Piazza Fontana massacre choose to perpetrate other and worse attacks again and again, all through the 1970s, indeed, as late as 1980, thus producing and sustaining “the strategy of tension”; this is precisely why Debord and Sanguinetti spent so much time and effort in the conception, production and distribution of Censor’s *Truthful Report*; this is precisely why Sanguinetti felt that he had to write and publish *On Terrorism and the State*.

<sup>74</sup> Guy Debord would, perhaps, have thought that at least two of these five, allegedly bad developments are, in fact, not bad: criminality (cf. Thesis 115 of *The Society of the Spectacle*: “On one hand, anti-union struggles of Western workers are being repressed first of all by the unions; on the other, rebellious youth are raising new protests, protests which are still vague and confused but which clearly imply a rejection of art, of everyday life, and of the old specialized politics. These are two sides of a new spontaneous struggle that is at first taking on a criminal appearance. They foreshadow a second proletarian assault against class society.”), and “the phenomenon” of armed struggle, which certainly had been practiced in other locations and long before the 1970s (cf. letter to Jaap Kloosterman, 23 February 1981: <http://www.notbored.org/kloosterman.html>).

one, but one that regrouped the survivors of the radical shipwreck and linked up with the wildcat strikers, who still struggled.

The ridiculous, final episode of the crisis in the Italian section took place in July [1970]. Far from the madding crowds, in a stormy encounter at Sanguinetti's summer residence, Salvadori expelled Gianfranco [from the SI] for a "resurgence of idiocies concerning his own life, conceptual casualness and even diminution," that is to say, for everything and anything, without concrete reasons. By letter, he said, "If there is no particular one, it is because they exist together." The incident caused some perplexity in Paris. An aggravating circumstance was the fact that Sanguinetti showed no signs of life, letting it be understood that he accepted his extravagant exclusion without flinching. In a second letter, despite the obscure statement that, "in his exclusion, one must see the necessity of rejecting his deep and tangible being," a phrase that caused jokes to be made, Salvadori laid out a string of details, each more ridiculous than the last: Sanguinetti gave himself the airs of a great lord; he'd drunk a demi-liter of grappa in a single sitting; he was infatuated with a kid; he vanished on a motorcycle going 85 mph; he lived the *dolce vita*<sup>75</sup>. . . . All this to hide the real motivations, which were the indelicate behavior of Sanguinetti with respect to Angéline Neveu, a former Enragé, the ex-companion of Patrick Negroni, and someone whom Salvadori was crazy about, and the fact that Sanguinetti also saw Connie, "just as Vaneigem did." Debord was in Spain, visiting Castile with Pierre Lepetit, and followed the affair via telephone. While in Segovia, he decided against Salvadori. In Paris, the [other] situationists held a meeting on 7 August at which Paolo's exclusion was proposed. And yet Viénet, the most indulgent of the group, was tasked with meeting him and receiving his explanations first-hand. He went to Rome to hear out the "deep and tangible being" of Salvadori, who was then in Milan, where Paolo added nuances to his arguments. While in Rome, Viénet finally got to hear Sanguinetti's version of the situation, which was transmitted by letter to the whole SI. Angéline, in Sperlonga on the afternoon of 27 July, had addressed bitter reproaches to Gianfranco over

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<sup>75</sup> Italian for "the good life." Literally, "the sweet life. "

the course of two hours, and he'd ended up leaving. Paolo had remained silent for almost the entire time. When they were alone, Angéline had told him that she wanted to see Sanguinetti thrown out of the SI. Paolo had decided then to exclude him. Then he spoke with Viénet and believed he could win him over, which was something that Viénet refused. Vaneigem said to his comrades pleasantly, "The farce of the lover who is unhappy with having been retrospectively cheated on by her husband. Thus we are tasked with being doubly ridiculous by having to settle domestic quarrels and by knowing nothing about them" (letter of 6 September). In September, recapitulating the events, an indignant Debord wrote to Sanguinetti: "We must be done with the metaphysicians in the SI, who survive in and for its real inactivity and who are only really active when they have the occasion to deploy some monstrous error, which alone impassions them. Shame and misery!"<sup>76</sup> As a result, he stated his opinion that the SI shouldn't keep "a phantom Italian section." Salvadori came to Paris to defend his case, but no one believed him when he denied the role played by Angéline and still less when he tried to justify his unilateral decision to exclude Gianfranco with the curious excuse that Sanguinetti had accepted it as a *fait accompli*. Salvadori was definitely shown the door on 22 September. Nevertheless, Viénet, Riesel and Sébastiani hardly appreciated Sanguinetti, and they thought that his passive and irresponsible conduct also merited exclusion, and, according to Yves Raynaud,<sup>77</sup> this was also the opinion of Vaneigem, but Debord stood up for him and saved him.

The Italian section succumbed in a laughable and painful way, even if a less-indolent Sanguinetti mitigated his dishonor by publishing a final manifesto [as an Italian situationist] titled "The Workers of Italy and the Revolt in Reggio Calabria"<sup>78</sup> in October. Thereafter, he joined the ranks of the French section, a fact that the authorities did not

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<sup>76</sup> Letter dated 8 September 1970: <http://www.notbored.org/debord-8September1970a.html>.

<sup>77</sup> Former member of the CMDO.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. <http://www.notbored.org/calabria.html>.

appreciate: they expelled him from France in July 1971.<sup>79</sup> The “Correspondence with an Editor” bore the signature of the Italian section for circumstantial reasons. In April, after the departure of Vaneigem and the French, Sanguinetti and Debord co-signed the “Theses on the SI and Its Times,” the final stage of the SI, and, in the summer of 1975, Sanguinetti brilliantly synthesized the work of the Italian section in a scandalous *Truthful Report on the Last Chances to Save Capitalism in Italy*.<sup>80</sup> In 1973, Salvadori’s translation of *Traité de savoir-vivre* [into Italian] was published.

The years have passed and some of the protagonists of the historical drama here mentioned are dead; others have disappeared into nature or passed into the realm of comedy, because it is well known that between arrogance, pertinence, casualness, misery, intelligence, betrayal, character . . . *sic transit gloria mundi*.<sup>81</sup>

Miguel Amorós  
August 2009

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<sup>79</sup> Cf. Debord’s “Declaration of Editions Champ Libre,” February 1976: <http://www.notbored.org/declaration.html>.

<sup>80</sup> In many ways, the *Truthful Report* was a collaborative effort. Debord sketched the book out (<http://www.notbored.org/debord-3January1973.html>) and Sanguinetti, with help from his friend and lawyer, Ariberto Mignoli, filled the sketch in and made the character of Censor come alive. Debord translated the book from Italian into French and was no doubt helpful in getting his translation published by Editions Gérard Lebovici.

<sup>81</sup> Latin: “Thus passes the glory of the world.” This is a very odd phrase (a *religious* phrase) to apply to the situationists, who certainly preferred the vanity and ephemerality of the real world to the alleged glory and permanence of a nonexistent after-life.

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<sup>82</sup> Translated into English as *Truthful Report on the Last Chances to Save Capitalism in Italy* (Colossal Books, 2014): <http://www.notbored.org/censor.html>.

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[www.melchiorre-mel-gerbino.com](http://www.melchiorre-mel-gerbino.com) contains abundant information about the "Beat" period.

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<sup>84</sup> The *Comontisi* were a situationist-inspired revolutionary group active in Italy between 1971 and 1972.