

Letter from Guy Debord to Robert Chasse,
Bruce Elwell and Tony Verlaan
14 December 1967¹

Dear comrades:

We were quite surprised by your letter.² It disappoints us, coming after what Raoul [Vaneigem] had believed he could communicate to us as objective trust in you. We distinguish two parts to your letter. The first, in our opinion, quite peripheral, concerns the relations between us all, on the one hand, and [Ben] Morea-Murray [Bookchin], on the other. The second part, essential, concerns the divergences between the positions expressed by your letter and the real bases of the SI.

– *First part*: with respect to Morea and Murray.

Raoul has made a report to us on the accord with Tony [Verlaan] and Robert [Chasse]; thus, on the break with [Allan] Hoffman and Morea. Our divergences with them are numerous. We consider some of these divergences (for example, authoritarian activism) to be sufficient for a complete organizational break. We consider other divergences (for example, calumny or collusion with mysticism) as demanding a total break, even personal. Thus Raoul, in his oral report upon his return from New York, had quite insisted on Hoffman's case as typical of the general poverty accepted by the American avant-garde until now. When Morea wrote us, Raoul had already departed on another trip, and we responded with very sufficient arguments anyway. Now returned, Raoul informs us of new specifications concerning the justification for this break – a justification that *we have never doubted*.

We judged it necessary to respond to Morea due to the following points.

Morea pretends to be ignorant as to why there was such a violent break with him. Because of what we know about the confusionism of the Black Flag³ milieu (we have seen Murray, in Paris, make a pact with those liars; on the other hand, Raoul has reported to us the stupefying news that Beatrice has claimed to have heard Guy say that he didn't know who Tony was), we wanted to clearly communicate to Morea several minimal reasons for our refusal to be associated with him. We believe that this was the correct procedure. We did not expect a honest self-critique from him, and his response was perfectly clear. We will no longer accept any contact with Morea, Bookchin or Hoffman, and *this can be the only result of discussions between you and us*.

– *Second part*: concerning your relations with the SI.

We have determined that there are very important divergences between you and us. And they are very surprising given the *history* of your approach to the SI and the basis of your interviews with Raoul. At this moment, we want to bring forth these divergences in a fraternal spirit, and insofar as it will be possible to favorably surpass them. We must say that this accord

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Footnotes by Alice Debord, except where noted.

² To Raoul Vaneigem, 10 December 1967.

³ *Translator*: English in original.

can only be sought on the bases that we enunciate below. We will try to enumerate these questions, beginning with the most important ones.

1) The existing situationist movement is not a federation of autonomous groups, but a single internationalist grouping of autonomous *individuals* who cooperate in a coherent manner. Naturally, there is a more immediate practical cooperation between geographically grouped individuals. But we stick to democratic decision-making by the majority of all the members of the SI. Likewise, we stick to the “universal” recognition of the participation of an individual in the SI (for example, if Tony, after having been a situationist in the USA, returns to Europe, we would find it completely necessary that he would be received as if he were at home by the other situationists in Paris, London or elsewhere).

2) We believe that you have somewhat neglected the *history* of the relations between us in the current exposition of your positions. We have never sought to *recruit* in any country, and we have never encouraged premature admissions to the SI. In America, there has been a special process: Tony has translated (well or poorly is a less important question to discuss) and distributed texts signed by the Situationist International; and he has opened, without asking our opinion or even telling us in advance, a post office box in the name [of the SI].

3) You have quite neglected all the practical problems that are objectively posed by your approach to the SI. Likewise, you have too much neglected the practical reality of our actions. There isn't “London” and “Paris” or “Copenhagen,” but nevertheless we must make here a certain effort to organize meetings or send delegates. For example, to discuss the American question, two English comrades came to Paris for several days. Likewise, we find an astonishing *incoherence*, even at the simply logical level, in your attitude when, simultaneously, you say that you still aren't members of the SI (with the result that you have not kept decisions of its majority in mind), and yet demand of us that we accept, without any other examination, all the breaks that you might declare in America. *We will really accept being automatically in solidarity with all of your actions from the moment that you are recognized situationists, confirmed by practice, on the American terrain.* But thus far you are not yet so. And when we raise the question, you point out new differences. It is only when these differences can be surmounted (theoretically and practically) that we can take up and deepen the accord sketched out with Raoul.

We do not at all understand your notion of “*prospective members*” of the SI. In Europe, there are several dozen individuals in excellent relations with us who are *possible* members of the SI in the future. Approximately one in three or one in four of them will become actual members. But so long as they are not, *all* of them obviously abstain from presenting themselves as being in a community of action with us and able to oblige or compel us.

We also think that you neglect practice by creating an artificial opposition between the amicable style of your long meeting with Raoul and the telegraphic style – which you are wrong to call administrative or bureaucratic – of a formal summary of these positions, a summary that has a *complementary function* and is subject to other necessities. We find truly regrettable the irrational sensitivity that makes you write that you were shocked to receive *ideas that are yours* as a decision “officially” formulated by the majority of the SI! Wouldn't it be more fitting for you to congratulate yourself on this proof of coherence? (By placing things in the terms that you use, you could also find in the already published issues of the journal *I.S.* something very much like a “directive” that might offend you, to the extent that these texts express ideas that you now share.)

4) There are many other things in your document that we must contest. If you are in agreement on the preceding points, our next emissary to America – because we remain firmly attached to

the practical principle of the *delegate*, for ourselves and for any coherent future revolutionary organization – will discuss these questions with you. For example, we are not at all opposed to Bruce [Elwell], but it is completely absurd on your part to reproach us for ignoring his evolution since Raoul's departure. When Raoul was with you, you had agreed that Bruce still wasn't on your bases; you never wrote to us concerning his change. Thus it is unacceptable that you write to us, as a reproach, that we must have known that he was with you thereafter. By telepathy perhaps?

The question of translations: we have said that some of them were *very bad* (including your new translation of the "Address,"⁴ originally made by us in Strasbourg and unnecessary to redo). We maintain that they are bad, not for stylistic reasons, but because they contain *mistranslations*. With respect to the "Durruti comics,"⁵ beyond any question of translation, it was bad to reprint them for a deeper and more obvious reason: they are meaningless outside of Strasbourg.

Likewise, a strange and displeasing bad humor leads you to not understand a simple phrase in our letter: what we call "postal interference" is the possibility that a letter might be seized by the police in London or Paris (it is *you yourselves* who explained to us that the lack of contact between Tony and us for several months derived from the fact that the mail at your post office box was systematically seized by the New York police!).

Comrade C.G.⁶ will address these questions, and several others, with you to the extent that you can respond in a satisfactory fashion to the three preceding points.

Amicably,

For the SI,

Guy Debord, Mustapha Khayati, Raoul Vaneigem, René Viénet

⁴ *Translator*: "Address to Revolutionaries in Algeria and All Countries," July 1965.

⁵ *Le Retour de la colonne Durruti*, by André Bertrand.

⁶ Christopher Gray.