

# On the Interdiction of my *Correspondence with Guy Debord* By Jean-François Martos<sup>1</sup>

“Proclaim loudly what is happening.” – Rosa Luxemburg<sup>2</sup>

At the end of September 1998, I published my correspondence with Guy Debord.<sup>3</sup> The publisher Fayard, in perfect complicity with Alice Debord,<sup>4</sup> soon thereafter brought a suit to interdict my book. For an advance on the rights of 480,000 francs, the publisher had purchased the “Complete Correspondence of Guy Debord.”<sup>5</sup>

A first “Temporary Restraining Order” demanding seizure and copious damages and interest was refused by the judge, which permitted the book to circulate freely for some time. Then, Fayard and Alice Debord appealed this decision, and an interdiction was ordered on 16 December 1998 and confirmed by the judgment of 13 January of the following year.

To get a better sense of such a measure, one must at first recall the practice of Guy Debord and the situationists in matters of *anti-copyright*.<sup>6</sup> “All the texts published in *Internationale situationniste* can be freely reproduced, translated or adopted, even without indication of origin.” This caption figured at the head of each of the dozen issues of the journal of which Guy Debord was the editorial director. It also signified that intellectual and artistic property is completely unfounded in a movement that straight away espoused the devaluation of art (industrial painting was, for example, the procedure by which the situationists sought to devalorize the traditional use of painting: the quantitative inflation of the interminable rolls of canvas, painted with the aid of machines, aimed at the destruction of the market value of art). This position was obviously maintained all through the life of Guy Debord: “I certainly do not defend the principle of literary property. As Brecht says, ‘all things belong to the one who improves them’” (*Correspondence with Guy Debord*).

Even when it was a question of enemies, a similar coherence was present. In a public response to a letter addressed to Guy Debord by a Stalinist publisher, the SI affirmed: “Revolutionaries have always reproduced what they have wanted of the texts by the SI: and we have never been opposed in any fashion to the many pirate editions, made in ten countries, of our texts and books. But the Feltrinelli publishing house is not even worthy of pirate editions. And even you, furthermore, if you ignore our refusal, you can be assured that we will not oppose you through any legal or bourgeois route” (*Correspondence with an Editor*).<sup>7</sup> A letter from the SI co-

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<sup>1</sup> Written in September 1999 and published by *Le fin mot de l’Histoire* (Paris, December 1999). Translated by Bill Brown and published in *NOT BORED!* #39 (September 2007).

<sup>2</sup> The full quote is “The most revolutionary thing one can do is always to proclaim loudly what is happening.” The source in Luxemburg’s opus is not clear.

<sup>3</sup> See Martos’ preface to this volume, “Like Oil on Fire.”

<sup>4</sup> This was the name taken by Alice Becker-Ho after the suicide of her husband, Guy Debord, on 30 November 1994.

<sup>5</sup> Begun in 1999, this series is now up to Volume VI, which covers the period 1979 to 1987.

<sup>6</sup> English in original.

<sup>7</sup> *Corrispondenza con un’editore*, exchanges between the Situationist International (Guy Debord and Gianfranco Sanguinetti) and Gian Piero Brega; originally published in Italian by the Situationist International, Milan, February 1972; translated into French by Joel Gayraud and Luc

signed by Guy Debord, this time attacking the falsifications by the publisher De Donato, similarly declares: “It is definite that the revolutionary organization in the name of which we speak will not lower itself to launch against you any lawsuit brought before bourgeois justice” (“The Fakes of De Donato,” published in *Internazionale Situazionista* #1). When Guy Debord had to make a unique exception to the rule that he had fixed (several journalists had accused him of having assassinated or ordered the assassination of his friend Gérard Lebovici), it was nevertheless in these terms that he expressed himself: “I have always ignored the press. I have never attempted to exercise a right to response, and even less have I wanted to undertake legal action against the people who have not ceased to defame me for as long as I can remember” (*Considerations on the Assassination of Gérard Lebovici*). Once again, and taking exception to the bad treatment inflicted on *The Society of the Spectacle* by a series of especially indelicate translators: “This treatment is not particularly reserved for subversive works, because in such cases the falsifiers at least do not have the fear of being summoned to court by the author” (*Preface to the Fourth Italian Edition of “The Society of the Spectacle”*).

*Anti-copyright*<sup>8</sup> is not conceived without the rejection of bourgeois justice. To the miserable conventions of literary property, which would like to reduce all expression – and thus critical theory [as well] – to a simple exchange-value, the situationists always opposed the only appropriation that is valued (that of the *use-value* of this theory) by those who alone can verify its efficacy *by putting it into practice*.

The totality of the preceding already sufficiently shows that the interdiction of my book is in total contradiction with the very spirit and thought of Guy Debord.<sup>9</sup> But this is not all, since he also affirmed: “As it is quite possible that you will become the historian who ‘has authority’ on such questions, and as the liars surely will persist in unforeseeable inventions, I now make for you a quick list of *the totality* of (my) pseudonyms: that is to say, any other will have been invented subsequently (...)” (letter from Guy Debord to Jean-François Martos, dated 27 July 1988, published in *Correspondence with Guy Debord*). Once again, and it is necessary to note that here it is a question of the last letter that he wrote me: “I thank you, once more, for the documents that you have transmitted to me. And I do not forget the many years, during which I really did not keep in contact with anyone else: and how precious this help alone had been (...) As you are, *par excellence*, my historian (because I have guarded against many others, we know it well), I communicate to you a semi-confidential text (...)” (letter from Guy Debord to Jean-François Martos, dated 26 December 1990, published in *Correspondence with Guy Debord*<sup>10</sup>). It

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Mercier, and published in *Section italienne de l’Internationale situationniste, écrits complets 1869-1972*, by Contre-Moule (Paris, 1988); and translated (from the Italian) by Phil Edwards as “Correspondence with an editor.”

<sup>8</sup> English in original.

<sup>9</sup> We have complete sympathy with Martos’ position and find his arguments admirable and compelling, but we must observe the fact that, after the dissolution of the SI in 1972, Debord no longer considered himself to be a situationist or bound by the “rules” that the SI established for its members. He may have continued to operate according to these “rules” after 1972, but he did so contingently, not necessarily.

<sup>10</sup> Note that, elsewhere in this letter, Debord is moralizing, depressed, paranoid and given over to suicidal ideation. If these states persisted in the years prior to his suicide, it is quite possible that he either made uncharacteristic or bad decisions in the 1990s or authorized Alice to make uncharacteristic or “bad” decisions after his death.

is clear that information and documents were frequently communicated to me by Guy Debord so that I could make them public subsequently. Justice can interdict the historian, [but] it cannot interdict the judgment of History.

If the will to not take into consideration the notions of literary property or *copyright*<sup>11</sup> emerge very early in Guy Debord's life (*détournement*, "clashing directly with all social and legal conventions," is characterized this way in 1956, in #8 of *Les Lèvres nues*: "In its totality, the literary and artistic heritage of humanity must be used for the ends of partisan propaganda (...) To be frank, it is necessary to finish with all notions of personal property in these matters."<sup>12</sup>) one has seen that this same resolve was affirmed without any exceptions for nearly 40 years and, consequently, well beyond the date on which he drafted his last will and testament (1973). This resolve was so strong that it also became that of his principal publisher and friend, Gérard Lebovici. For example, in 1980, Lebovici wrote to Editions Nautilus: "We leave all liberty to all of the pirate publishers so as to make all of their stupidities, which do not engage us at all" (*Correspondence* of Editions Champ Libre, Volume I). No pirate edition of any book by Debord was ever contested or prosecuted; when necessary, some were simply critiqued. Critique is a weapon of revolutionaries; legal prosecution is a weapon of owners. The terms of the will of 1973, invoked at the time of the lawsuit, did not at all enter into contradiction with anything that preceded it: the ceding of rights that Guy Debord himself possessed during his life did not in any way imply the modification of the usage that Debord himself had made of them during his life. No one contested that Alice Debord had inherited those rights: what was contested was the usage she was making of them.

Presuming that Alice Debord still defended our previously shared positions, I certainly could not imagine such a reversal, in which she would take the role of "the plaintiff" in the lawsuit against me. It is in such a context that it is necessary to fully appreciate the buffoonery that strutted in a newspaper: "In the corridors of publishing, one hears evoked – for badly dissimulated commercial reasons – questions about the heritage and legitimacy concerning Debord and his oeuvre. There is no problem with Debord's heritage. There is only a Debord problem (...) There is nothing to make bear fruit (...) There are no inheritors. It is Debord who must inherit Debord" (Alice Debord and Patrick Mosconi, *Le Monde*, 1 November 1996).

The temporary restraining order affirmed: "At the end of September 1998, Madame Alice Debord had the surprise of discovering at a bookstore a work by Jean-François Martos entitled *Correspondence with Guy Debord*." Is this not feigning surprise, instead of being surprised, by the publication of my correspondence? I do not only speak here of the fact that the publication of correspondence was a constant among the situationists and other radicals, as a weapon of critical intervention into the debates of the moment (it is sufficient, for example, to glance through the volumes of the *Correspondence* of Editions Champ Libre, diverse situationist publications or *The Orientation Debate of the Ex-Situationist International*, which was, moreover, independently published by others). But also, quite simply, I would say that there is nothing surprising about me doing what I have always done. In 1971, I published *The Italian Workers and the Revolt of Reggio di Calabria*, a [French] translation of a pamphlet by the Italian section of the SI. In 1972, I reprinted the *Report on the Construction of Situations and on the Conditions of Organization and Action of the International Situationist Tendency*, a text by Guy Debord

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

<sup>12</sup> The essay in question is "Mode d'emploi du *détournement*," translated into English by Ken Knabb as "A User's Guide to *Détournement*."

from 1957; and then, around 1976, *On Form*, a book by Asger Jorn originally published by the Situationist International in 1958. These texts were cheerfully published at a loss, having as their only goal spreading critical truth. At the time I first met him, Guy Debord was naturally happy to see practiced what he had always encouraged. Furthermore, I do not believe having had great merit here, because there were many of us who were assuring the reproduction and distribution of subversive writings. More generally, the spirit in matters of revolutionary publishing was such that no one took it into their head to quibble about questions of *copyright*<sup>13</sup> or literary property, under pain of being the general laughingstock or enduring insults. It is true that at the time the restoration that followed May 68 still had not attained its full glaciation, and the merchants did not dare to reduce it too much.

Still in the domain of contestatory or radical publishing, I add an even more striking example of this spirit. In 1976, when Mustapha Khayati was opposed to Champ Libre's reprinting of *The Poverty of Student Life*, Gérard Lebovici responded to him: "I have indeed decided to reprint *The Poverty of Student Life* without asking your opinion, no more than that of its first publisher, the UNEF. If you had been, in complete independence, the only author of this opus, I would have responded to you just the same (...) that all the attempts at obscurantist censorship will always be treated with the same scorn (...) Your nostalgic pretension is vain with respect to a document that belongs to history."<sup>14</sup> This letter, published in Volume I of the *Correspondence* of Editions Champ Libre, was thus commented upon by Guy Debord: "You have quite justly recognized my style (...) in the letter to the Ratgebists signed by Lebovici, which was not written in this form by me, but in which he has placed a number of elements of a response that I furnished him."<sup>15</sup> What would Guy Debord think<sup>16</sup> of the obscurantist censors of today, who have *not even written* what they interdict? What extreme scorn would he have reserved for them?

Alice Debord thus has no reason to be surprised by the publication of my correspondence. Rather it is me who is surprised by her sudden reversal.<sup>17</sup>

Among other arguments, the publisher Fayard – defending its scrap of meat – emphasized the commercial damages to which it was subjected. Being totally indifferent to grocers' quarrels, I responded, since I had been attacked, that my publishing work did not have the potential, nor

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

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Lebovici to Khayati dated 24 October 1976.

<sup>15</sup> Letter from Debord to Jaime Semprun dated 26 October 1976.

<sup>16</sup> *Author's note*: What would he think of his authorized biography, authored by Philippe Sollers? Concerning a television broadcast entitled *A Century of Writers*, dedicated to Guy Debord, *Le Figaro* for 22 July 1999 stated: "Philippe Sollers has obtained authorization from the widow of Guy Debord to write this document. It promises to be spectacular." [Note by the translator: Philippe Sollers (born 1936) is a Leftist novelist who founded *Tel Quel* in 1960 and became a dedicated Debordologist after his suicide. Debord didn't think much of him: "Insignificant, since it is signed by Philippe Sollers," he remarks in *Cette Mauvaise réputation* (1993) in response to something Sollers had written.]

<sup>17</sup> It seems to us that, perfidious though Alice Becker-Ho's actions have been, she is following through on the direction begun by her husband in 1993, when he agreed to let Gallimard – a publisher *excoriated* by the situationists – reprint his works, and in 1994, when he agreed to make a work for French television, *Son Art et Son Temps*, which, sorry to say, turned out to be horrible (moralizing, depressed and depressing, self-important, even boring).

even the intention, of harming that of Fayard, and not only because my *Correspondence with Guy Debord* was a project quite distinct in form, arrangement of content and aims from those of the *Complete Correspondence of Guy Debord* in six volumes. But also because only a fragment – presented, ordered and annotated differently – would be held in common by my volume and Volume VI (a volume, according to the contract, that would appear in 2004 at the earliest) to be published by Fayard. This is why any reader interested in Guy Debord’s correspondence in general (what he would find in it is another question, which I take up further on) would procure this sixth volume, whether or not he had my own volume. Even more, a reading of my book could only contribute to the sharpening of the interest of the reader in a much wider correspondence, which renders even more absurd the commercial agonies of Fayard, which laments that “potential readers are not so numerous.” This renders the strange lack of confidence of this publisher in its future releases.

I have, moreover, always thought that in these domains diversity is not harmful. I recall that, for example, in 1980, when I published my translation of *On Terrorism and the State* by Gianfranco Sanguinetti, there was an edition from Grenoble<sup>18</sup> at the same time. Each of these two publications found its path among its readers (a notable part even procuring both editions so as to compare them) and I tranquilly said to myself that the best would win out.

To return to this Goliath of publishing that would have me pass for the David who wanted to bring him down, threatening his network of distribution with a book that was *different*, self-published (3,000 copies) and self-distributed (principally in a few Parisian bookstores), I must say that, without under-estimating my capacities, I have found such a stupefying accusation perfectly laughable if it wasn’t such a sinisterly serious affair.

As for the “exclusivity” of Alice Debord and Fayard, which I have not respected due to my “untimely publication” (have I ever sought to be opportune?), I would simply recall that radical critique does not reason in terms of exclusivity, but historical necessity. Here is a necessity that naturally excludes exclusivity.

I have also been accused of “infringement” and I must confess that I find this accusation resolutely Swiftian. By simply publishing my correspondence in my fashion, I have thus succeeded in “counterfeiting,” years in advance, a book that has not yet been published and, I repeat, inevitably different (“The publisher confides in Madame Alice Debord and Monsieur Patrick Mosconi, who accept, the care of writing the original text of a book,” the contract affirms). Soon one could perhaps – according to a radically advanced conception of infringement – interdict any of the books that might appear on the pretext that they are also composed of letters of the alphabet. And why not, since today one sees film producers buy, in advance, *the landscapes* for films that they envision shooting, thereby denying the rights of others to film whatever, under the pain of being dragged before a court of law.

Another complaint lodged against me merits particular attention: I have “not hesitated to publish (...) several photographs of Guy Debord, one of which shows him with Madame Alice Debord in a scene of domestic intimacy, her breasts naked. This reproduction constitutes an intolerable injury to the intimacy of the private life of Madame Debord and her right to her image” (*Summons on a Fixed Date*). I will at first remark that the utilization of photographs of private people is constant throughout the life of Guy Debord, and that he was never concerned

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<sup>18</sup> See Lebovici’s letter to its publishers dated 12 September 1980.

with notions such as artistic or intellectual *propriété*.<sup>19</sup> The deliberate casualness with which photographs were published in diverse situationist publications indicates their refusal of a distinction between public life and private life, a distinction that has never had currency in radical milieus. Many individuals have been excluded from organizations and their exclusions were announced as such due to facts that came from what the Right considers to be “private life.” The situationists summarized their point of view by defining private life as “a life deprived of everything.” If this distinction has no currency, this is not due to negligence but rather to a conscious and deliberate decision: and it is completely surprising and bizarre to now see Madame Debord invoke publicly – for use in her bad cause – a distinction that she had previously always treated with the greatest scorn.<sup>20</sup> The same with the currently invoked notion of “domestic intimacy” and, not so long ago, presented as perfectly laughable. Finally, although she publicly appeared nude and in “suggestive” positions in the film *The Society of the Spectacle*, Alice Debord is ill-advised to obfuscate (with false modesty) these photographs I have published, which are perfectly anodyne in this perspective. But the essential, of course, is not here: if I published these photographs, it was above all, quite simply, because they were an integral part of the correspondence and were commented upon in it. But this was also because this type of document presents a quite particular meaning, one clearly expressed by Guy Debord: “The second volume (of *Panegyric*) contains a series of iconographic proofs. The dominant deceptions of the epoch are in the process of making forgotten the fact that the truth can also be seen in images. The image that has not been intentionally separated from its meaning adds much precision and certitude to learning (...) Authentic illustration clarifies true discourse (...) One thus will know what my appearance was at different ages, what genre of faces have always surrounded me, and which places I have inhabited. These circumstances, gathered together and considered, can perfect judgment.” When this truth, this learning, [and] this judgment are rendered impossible by an excessive and aberrant usage of the “right to her image,” it is the necessity of authentic testimony and truthful information – and thus, finally, history – which fall into the trap.

With respect to Guy Debord’s refusal of notions of *copyright*<sup>21</sup> and literary property, the judgment of 13 January 1999 decreed: “During his life Guy Debord adopted a position more philosophical – revealing his manner of apprehending his true life – than legal.” In this logic of

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<sup>19</sup> The French word *propriété* can mean “property” and “propriety,” both of which are in play here.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, the letter dated 7 September 1971 – sent “to all the people concerned” – in which Guy, drawing upon what Alice has told him, ridicules René Riesel because *his wife* faked an orgasm when Alice had sex with her. Another example: Alice’s decision to include in Volume 5 (1973-1978) of the *Correspondence* the letter that her husband wrote to Paola – the woman who left her husband to be with Gianfranco Sanguinetti – on 6 February 1975. It includes such rather personal observations as “it seems to me that one might develop your very remarkable tendencies to exhibitionism and, perhaps to a lesser extent, to lesbianism; no doubt several sado-masochistic possibilities that still lie dormant, but not far from awakening” and “I will only abstain from pushing you towards the pleasures that you might possibly find in seeing yourself publicly offered, on the spot, to people that you still do not know, because this could perhaps evoke a little too much, *in the ignorant or malevolent eyes of outside people*, certain forms of prostitution” (our emphasis).

<sup>21</sup> English in original.

separation, which opposes a philosophical Debord to a juridical Debord, I see that it is especially important to affirm a Debord who was amusing to the gallery and whose publicly proclaimed positions need not be taken seriously. When one knows that the coherence between theory and practice was at the center of the *revolutionary* activity of Guy Debord, I also see what such an affirmation serves and which interests – not all of them economic – that it expresses.

In the decision of 13 January, the judges considered that the quality of the addressee of a letter does not make one the owner of the intellectual content of the letter, of which the addressee only possesses the material entity. This issue was considered too hastily: beyond the fact that these letters belong to history, it is again the logic of separation that is at work here. Actually, the addressee of a letter is not only the holder of its material substance: as addressee, he is very often the inspiration for the letter, either in the sense that his correspondent responds to him and situates himself on the terrain that he himself has defined, or in the sense that his correspondent praises his personal qualities, or even criticizes them (or any other interaction that constitutes the very dynamic of a correspondence). And so, the addressee of a letter is – in this capacity as well as in the capacity of being the author of letters that he addresses in return – to be considered as the *co-author* of a correspondence that is to be considered as a whole. The artificial separation of a correspondence, which is by definition a living and intersubjective reality, so as to constitute fragments of reality, of which one can then find legitimate owners who can use and abuse their rights – this is a flagrant violation of such a reality and must be considered as a deliberate destruction of the real contents of this correspondence.

My volume is manifestly, and to a unique degree, the only one that can be qualified as rigorously “complete” (what cannot be published – one can easily imagine why – represents a very small amount) within the framework that it has set for itself as well as in the period that it covers. This volume delivers to the reader all that is available so that he can *read* the letters, that is to say, understand them. The volumes planned by Fayard (the *Summons Before the Court of Appeal* affirms: “The correspondence of Guy Debord is quite voluminous, and cannot be published, as is, *without selection*”; my emphasis) obviously constitute a series that wants to be *complete*, in the sense of chronology, but *incomplete* due to the same principle, since it quite probably will only contain the letters written by Guy Debord, but neither those to which he was responding nor those responding to him: we thus have the illustration of a perfectly falsified conception of any correspondence.<sup>22</sup> The reader can only read, that is to say, understand the letters that he holds in his hands and these, become simple objects for collection, lose a great deal of their readability (the incomprehensible and unilateral succession that is a *non-correspondence* fallaciously calls itself the *Complete Correspondence*). Has the enemy of commodity fetishism ended up a fetishized object?

In 1972, Editions Champ Libre published a book, the cover of which was composed by the following inscription, on the front and as a full page: *The Veritable Split in the International: A public circular of the Situationist International, Paris, 1972*. This was a détournement, encompassing the typography, of the cover of a pamphlet issued by the First International, which was reproduced symmetrically on the back cover of this book and again as a full page: *The Supposed Splits in the International: Private circular of the General Council of the International Association of Workers, Geneva, 1872*. This détournement was, naturally, reproduced exactly when the second Champ Libre edition was published in 1981, and likewise for the third edition,

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<sup>22</sup> This is precisely what Jean-Pierre Baudet (a former friend of and collaborator with Martos) says in the essay titled “Signed X” and dated 3 February 2007.

which was a pirated one.<sup>23</sup> I was stupefied to see the 1998 edition of this same book, published by Fayard: the *détournement* had completely disappeared and the title was amputated and transformed into *The Veritable Split* (which did not prevent the publisher from affirming: “The text that one reads here is that of the original edition”). That which is already perfectly intolerable for an historical text takes on its full extent when one knows the central importance of the concept of *détournement* for Guy Debord (as he clearly expressed in the *Forward to the Third French Edition of “The Society of the Spectacle”*: “This book, of which I have never changed a single word, was reprinted in 1971 (...) The current edition has remained rigorously identical to that of 1967. The same rule will, moreover and quite naturally, govern the republishing of all my books by Gallimard. I am not someone who corrects himself”<sup>24</sup>).

In the preface to my interdicted book, I gave several examples of trickery and falsification: with respect to the correspondence of Madame de Sevigne; a false letter placed in the archives of a painter of renown; and surprising documents opportunely extracted from the archives of the KGB so as to discredit certain people. Considering that one is never so well-served as by oneself, I addressed the reader and affirmed with respect to my correspondence: “As I am involved in this project, he can be sure of its contents: the risks of virtual writing, like its quite real rectifications, have not been taken in this matter. Besides, the current state of decay of publishing means that publishers are less and less adequate, when they are not frankly dubious: it is often judicious to self-publish each time that this is possible.” I clearly evoked here the extension of trickery that accelerated information permits, from which comes the utility of self-management in matters of publishing. I had been thinking of other and future publications (for example, possible fakes claimed to have been written by Guy Debord, which he asked me to denounce in such cases – *Correspondence with Guy Debord*, page 112) and not those planned by Alice Debord, which were quite different from mine; and I had never wanted to harm in any way a *veritable* complete correspondence of Guy Debord, the importance and necessity of which cannot escape any serious reader. But today, when I see rising on the horizon a *Fayardized* (that is to say, unilateral) correspondence of Guy Debord, coming after Fayard’s *Masperization*<sup>25</sup> of *The Veritable Split in the International*, it is piquant, if one can say so, to ascertain the extent to which what I affirmed in “Like Oil on Fire” must *today* be applied to Editions Fayard/Alice Debord, as well.

This “correspondence” operation is obviously not innocent. A preface, notes, arrangement, [and] documents have together contributed to make my book into an urgent critical intervention (“To avoid a tardy volume (...) not to limit myself to the necessary historical testimony (...) to stir up several still burning subjects,” to provide useful information, notable clarifications) that had sufficient time to create some effects before the interdiction and despite

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<sup>23</sup> The English translation of this book published by Chronos in 1974 (reprinted in 1985 and 1990) also displays this *détournement*. The version published by Pluto Books (2003) does not.

<sup>24</sup> Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith and included in the 1994 Zone Books edition of *The Society of the Spectacle*. Note the absolute absurdity of Debord’s saying “I am not someone who corrects himself” immediately after reversing the proclamation made to Editions Gallimard on 16 March 1975 (“I ask you to note, once and for all, that I do not want to entertain any kind of relations, even quite indirect, with Editions Gallimard”), *without explanation or even acknowledgment of this change of mind*.

<sup>25</sup> Editions Maspero was infamous for “Bowdlerizing” the texts that it published: it simply left out the passages that did not suit its own politics.



the generalized *omerta* of the press concerning the interdiction's imminent possibility (with the quasi-exception of Helene Hazera of *Libération*).

“Never has censorship been so perfect” (*Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*). Never have so many books been interdicted or fallen under the blow of legal proceedings. The procedure has attained such perfection that a book can be interdicted before it has even been written, as was the case in October 1998 (with respect to the biography of a film actor). With this new habit, which is the responsibility of the integrated spectacle, the book-burning era returns.

The “commercial” lawsuit that was brought against me did not only end up denying me my freedom of expression, it also immediately involved political censorship. What ends were served by this interdiction, its stakes and its effects, what it gladdens or comforts, are not so clear.

It seems to me that the interdiction of a book would be horrifying to any authentic libertarian. Among the correspondents of Guy Debord, many today still consider themselves to be libertarians. And would they not, and rightly so, demand a really complete correspondence?<sup>26</sup>

There is a song – by one Alice Becker-Ho, as a matter of fact<sup>27</sup> – that is being re-released. She wrote it in 1968 and it says:

The old world and its gangs,  
We want to sweep away.  
It is a matter of being cruel,  
Death to the cops and the priests.

And here is another song, by Bobby Lapointe,<sup>28</sup> and it says:

Your heart no longer has the warmth  
That I loved. It beats to the rhythm of money,  
It lives in the shadow of the cops.

It is called “It comes, it goes,” and appears on an album entitled *Understand who can*.

*Anda jaleo!*<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Note that, unlike Jean-Pierre Baudet, Martos does not call for specific actions (refusing Alice Debord/Fayard the rights to publish letters or mention names in any forthcoming volume, for example), nor does he castigate those who take no action and let such an abomination proceed uncontested.

<sup>27</sup> “Chanson du CMDO,” released on the disk *Pour Finir avec le Travail* (1974). Perhaps this is a good moment to ask: if Alice Becker-Ho was a member of the Council for Maintaining the Occupations (CMDO), and such a militant one, at that, why didn't she join the SI afterwards?

<sup>28</sup> Robert Lapointe (1922-1972) was a French singer and songwriter. The album Martos mentions was released in 1970.

<sup>29</sup> Spanish for “Make a racket!”