



Surrealism Against the Current

TRACTS AND DECLARATIONS

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY
MICHAEL RICHARDSON AND KRZYSZTOF FIJAŁKOWSKI

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INTRODUCTION: SURREALISM AS A COLLECTIVE ADVENTURE

Here is a meeting of beings characterised by the same lines of balance. An exalting friendship at the heart of an elective group which situates itself beyond ideas, beyond the gregarious. A certainty that the amalgam of certain individuals, an active focal point, can recreate the world. Any action is only valid as a function of the TANGIBILITY it implies and projects. To turn each gesture into a spasm of love. WE WISH TO BE PRISMS, TOTALLY REFLECTIVE FOR EVERY KIND OF LIGHT, ABOVE ALL THOSE WE HAVE YET TO KNOW.¹

Surrealism is among the most influential ideas of the twentieth century. It has made an impact in virtually every sphere of life and the word itself has entered the vocabulary in a significant way as an adjective serving to describe a certain sort of outlandishness (even though such a bewildering array of different uses of the word rarely corresponds with anything the surrealists themselves would recognise). From another perspective, however, the influence of surrealism has been negligible, indeed the incorporation of the letter rather than the spirit of surrealism into the frame of a familiar vocabulary could be seen as a sign of defeat, a sign that it has succumbed to the forces of orthodoxy as an adolescent rebellion against prevailing, necessary reality. From its very beginnings, surrealism has had to struggle against its grave diggers. The verses of their song may have changed in content over the years, but its refrain remains familiar: surrealism is dead, but its 'spirit' lives on as an influence on one or another cultural activity in today's society. Such a backhanded compliment rarely serves as anything but a transparent attempt at reductionism.

In editing this collection, we have wanted above all to bring attention to the essence of surrealism as a collective idea whose very rationale is founded in the implications that emerge from any attempt at thinking together. As such, its primary challenge may be said to have been to the individualism that has underwritten cultural forms since the Enlightenment. Surrealism may, in this respect, be accurately defined, as André Masson once asserted, as 'the collective experience of individualism'. The challenge this implies has rarely been taken up in critical studies either of surrealism or of individual surrealists, which overwhelmingly persist in regarding

surrealism as an accretion of individuals coming together under the tutelage of André Breton rather than as a concentration of collective energy taking form through individual endeavour. This distinction is, we believe, crucial to any understanding of the nature of surrealism and is what motivates this volume. Jacques Lacan, one of the few non-surrealists to have appreciated this aspect, once defined surrealism as ‘a tornado on the edge of an atmospheric depression where the norms of humanist individualism founder’,² and the collective documents that have been a feature of surrealist activity from its beginnings are the most immediate evidence of its extent.

THE SURREALIST MILIEU

As is well known, surrealism was born in the social, cultural and intellectual ferment that followed the First World War. That it began as a Parisian movement is significant. In 1914, Paris perceived itself as the centre of civilisation. It was, as Walter Benjamin asserted, ‘the capital of the nineteenth century’ and it stood far above London – its only rival – as the city that embodied the aspirations and material achievements of Western civilisation. Not simply the centre of the West, it was more specifically the capital of French rationalism and the Enlightenment ideal, representing its quintessence against the narrowness of English empiricism or the portentousness of German philosophy. With the ending of the war in 1918, such a view was, if not in tatters, at least tarnished. The war exposed the raw nerves of civilisation itself and made the idea of being its ‘centre’ little more than a sick joke for many of the younger generation who had themselves suffered from the consequences of fighting a ‘war to end all wars’; it was in fact responsible for nothing but a wasteful and meaningless carnage.

The fact that France had won the war merely served to accentuate such a crisis of consciousness. For Germany, defeat was humiliating and created a sense of grievance that would feed the forces of revenge and ultimately have disastrous consequences. But it did not so much lead to disillusion with civilisation as create a mood, as defeat had in France after 1871, of decadence and hedonism. For Britain, victory had not come as hard as it had for the French. British soldiers may have suffered the same horrors as their allies and adversaries, but the war had a more limited impact on social polity: the civilian population knew it only at second hand, in the experiences of those who returned and, more poignantly, of those who did not. Terrible as this was, it was not sufficient to dispel the idea that the war remained a necessity and neither for the British nor the Germans was it seriously contemplated that civilisation itself was at stake.

In contrast, France suffered at every level of society in a way that nothing could justify. No one could be entirely untouched by this horror and even the land itself bore its scars, in the form of minefields and trenches that remained behind long after hostilities had ended, and even more poignantly

in the vast cemeteries that left a permanent memorial to the terrible waste that no platitudes could obscure. Experience of trench warfare led to a real sense of disgust with the society responsible for it that was so strong it left many people with a sense of loathing that would never be assuaged. This is certainly the case for André Breton himself and for many of those who were to found surrealism. This time and place are therefore crucial for understanding the determinants that led to the establishing of the Surrealist Movement.

One crucial aspect of this process that has been insufficiently noted was the specific experience these young people had of the war. As middle-class intellectuals they encountered at first hand what such people rarely directly know: real suffering (in Marx's sense), to the extent that it was sufficient to turn them against their own social position and actively seek alternatives. In normal circumstances, the middle class are incapable of experiencing such suffering: the organisation of society ensures that their lives are insured against it. They may understand its injustice, identify with suffering by extension, and genuinely participate in movements for social justice, but they do so invariably from a position of privilege and in conditions that make the sense of visceral rage that may be engendered among the lower classes inaccessible to them. The First World War may be said to have exposed the raw nerves of middle-class France by giving the combatants in the war such an experience of rage in an immediate way. Surrealism – especially in its essential collective form – cannot be understood without an appreciation of this background. This was why it could lay claim to embodying a universal sensibility: the particular circumstances in which it was founded may have been objectively formed in the particular situation of France after the First World War; the experience to which they were responding, however, was fundamentally human. It is not going too far to say that the young people who were drawn to surrealism at this time felt they had nothing to lose: the society in which they lived had nothing to offer them that could assuage their sense of rage, and we should not be surprised that one of their first organised activities was an enquiry into the possibilities of suicide.

Admittedly this 'crisis of consciousness' was not born only from the war. It had been taking shape in the pre-war period and can be traced to the decadence of the fin-de-siècle era and, even further back, in the romantic revolt against classical norms and in the whole intellectual ferment initiated by the French Revolution. Throughout Europe, in the early years of the century, intellectual and artistic movements proliferated. Although some of such groupings, such as cubism, primarily represented the concretisation of a particular style in art, others, such as the different forms of futurism in Italy and Russia and expressionism in Germany, raised sociopolitical concerns within their intellectual framework. Most radically, Dada, which

took form in 1915 in Zurich and from which surrealism was directly to emerge, declared its own war on the society that had created the debacle of world war, declaring its values bankrupt.

As the negation of the Dada's negation, surrealism represented, at least in its own self-perception, the starting point for a new sensibility. For all of its radical renunciation of bourgeois values, Dada was still part of the developing European avant-garde now reified as 'modernism'. As it took form, however, Paris Dada (the fact that the French Dadaists, unlike those in Zurich or New York, were participants in the war is significant) soon reacted as much against the traditionally marginal role assigned to artists in bourgeois society as against the values of that society itself. This perception may be said to be the foundation of surrealism, announced in the first major collective declaration given by the surrealists: 'We have nothing to do with literature, but when necessary we are as capable as anyone else of making use of it' (see p. 24). Not a new poetic form, surrealism was 'a cry of the mind turning back on itself and it is determined to smash its fetters' (*ibid.*). Despite this insistence, which surrealism consistently maintained as among its first and most determining principles, it is precisely as a poetic form that many critics have sought to judge it. Yet the specificity of surrealism can hardly even be considered in such terms. If surrealism has any meaning – at least in terms understood by the surrealists themselves – it is precisely due not simply to the rupture it made with traditional ideas of the role of the artist; it also involved a clear break with the modernism of which Dada was the most radical expression. It is in this refusal to be confined within poetic form (even an anti-poetic form) that the specificity of surrealism must be sought, and it is also this that marks it off from the intellectual movements that preceded it and, indeed, from those that followed it. And this investigation – an investigation founded in revolt and rage – was above all to be centred in a rejection of an Enlightenment individualism which, during the nineteenth century, had led to art being considered the product of genius. In reaction, for surrealism, poetry was seen as the preserve of all, founded in a collective endeavour whose interstices also needed to be explored collectively. Philippe Audoin has stated that 'these people, together, saw something'.³ This revelatory aspect is crucial to understanding surrealism, but perhaps the emphasis could be differently situated: 'these people saw something together'.

Symbolically the surrealists sought out unpretentious cafés in which to gather, generally on the right bank, well away from areas where intellectuals traditionally congregated. The Dada and later surrealist 'headquarters' was the Certá, in the Passage de l'Opéra, which, being in the centre of the Paris business and shopping centres, was frequented by a nondescript crowd of office workers, shoppers and strollers. If the café had enormous importance in the daily life of the surrealists it was in a different way to

those of other Parisian intellectuals. The surrealist café was not primarily a place for intellectual discussion but a place of encounter. Surrealists sought out places where the clientele would be congenial, comprising preferably a mixed bag of the working class, the dispossessed and various marginals. A certain taste for decrepitude, for the unwonted and the out-of-place was part of a general surrealist inclination. These qualities were not so much valued for themselves as for offering an ambience in which the unexpected was to be expected and where the promise of revelation was always present. This sense is well conveyed in the 'Passage de l'Opéra' section of Aragon's *Paris Peasant*, and throughout the history of surrealism the preferred location has been, in Nadeau's words, 'the Montmartre of suspect boulevards swarming with the odd fauna of whores and their pimps, the crowd of those who pretend to enjoy themselves. Encounters here were astonishing: circus people [...] accompanied by trapeze girls with their eyes "elsewhere"'.⁴ Doubtless this rejection of the intellectual life of the left bank may be ascribed to a sort of inverse snobbery, but it also reveals a very real distaste for the closed nature of Parisian intellectual circles, in a city in which everyone knows everyone and one tends to be judged by who one is 'in' with. Surrealism needed to create its own space and break with the Parisian cliquishness and parochialism that asserted Paris as the 'centre of the world'. As André Thirion was to write, in the literary quarters 'the clever skill with which people presented themselves as painters or literati seemed to spoil the element of chance in advance and took away any sense of anticipation'.⁵ This was thus a tactical decision, one essential to the development of surrealism as a particular sensibility. In discussing the life of surrealist cafés, Robert Benayoun has said that the rendezvous would usually be changed for rather trivial reasons – a boorish or too familiar waiter, a bad-tempered cashier or because 'stockbrokers, philatelists or actors' had meetings in the same café. They also objected to cards or music being played.⁶

The French group's final choice of café, which served them from 1954 until the dissolution in 1969 of daily meetings, was the Promenade de Vénus, in what was then the working-class Les Halles district. It was chosen because (apart from the charm of the name) it was, according to Benayoun, central, strategic, comfortable, magnetic and itinerant, precisely the sort of place in which a moral community could form, one grounded in the surrounding society. Establishing this moral sensibility may be said to be a central surrealist motivation, one that runs through the documents collected in this volume.

THE SURREALIST GROUP

Surrealism is not easy to define. Certainly the common idea of the 'surreal' could hardly be further removed from what the surrealists themselves understood by it. If everyone thinks they know what 'surrealism' is, it may

be said that to gain a sense of what it really means requires some restatement of fundamental principles. What immediately needs to be understood is that surrealism in itself is beyond definition, being no more determined by the activity of its adherents than by what force of circumstances would reduce it to: by its very nature it is proteiform, defined not by what it is but what it will become. We should therefore consider it only as something that is fundamentally transcendent of its own ontological category. As such it has something in common with the tao or the gnosis, which is precisely how Breton placed surrealism in what remains its clearest definition: the will to discover that point at which opposing categories are no longer perceived contradictorily (the 'supreme point'). Surrealism is not reducible to what people actually do. Rather, it takes shape provisionally through the activity that takes place within its confines (even while *a priori* exceeding it). Nor can it be said to be an homogeneous activity. Fundamentally internationalist, surrealist groups have developed across the world with their own orientations and agendas. If its core has historically been Paris, there have always been different fractions participating both within and without this group itself.

From this perspective, any understanding of surrealism must confront the nature of its collective activity and not (as most studies do) look at it as a concatenation of individual energies. By bringing together the most important collective declarations of surrealism over its whole history in a thematic way, we hope to provide, with this volume, the tools for a better understanding of this collective endeavour. This collective aspect continues to draw people to surrealism seven decades after its foundation, and the Paris Surrealist Group has functioned actively from 1924 to the present day (although it would be more accurate to see this as four separate groups, divided into historical periods: 1924–39; 1939–45; 1947–69; 1970 to date). The flow of the movement may be charted through the collective declarations they have made over the years.

Although earlier movements issued manifestos, these tended to be largely rhetorical, at best statements of intent. What characterises surrealism is that the declaration became an expression of a collective point of view on a range of subjects (paradoxically, although Breton's two *Manifestos of Surrealism* are perhaps the movement's most widely known theoretical texts, they were expressions precisely of an individual viewpoint, albeit ratified by the entire group). This collective perspective emerged from the concentrated nature of surrealist activities, especially for the Paris group. From 1924 until 1969, with the exception of the war years, the group in Paris met every weekday (with a summer break – although the members of the group often spent holidays together). In the early years the meetings were twice daily – at lunchtime and again in the evening – but at some point seem to have been reduced to one meeting in the evening, between six and

eight o'clock. Attendance varied from half a dozen to sometimes around 50. The aim was that there should be about a dozen active members of the group, to keep its activity as intimate and intense as possible, but without establishing any set structures or conditions of membership.

Meetings of the French Surrealist Group were essentially social, providing a place of rendezvous. Café meetings were not primarily for serious work: if a tract had to be issued, or an exhibition was being prepared, say, then those charged with the organising would arrange to meet separately. What is the nature of such an association? Jochen Noth defined its difference from any political group: 'A political party whose actions are led towards the exterior places at its heart a form of discipline that easily, and perhaps fatally, becomes a domination by the activists over the subjects. In surrealist revolt the process is reversed: the group is not a tool, but creates a sort of space for communication and internal exchange, a process which largely replaces the old communication of artists in relation to society: in great part the surrealist refusal consists in a refusal of society itself, but through a social organ that is the group.'⁷

In an extended discussion of this point, Jules Monnerot considered the Surrealist Group to be more like a secret society than an art movement.⁸ In seeking to classify it, Monnerot showed that it had little in common with most established collective forms. He insists that 'clan', 'band' or 'sect' are inappropriate, and considers that the appropriate term might be the English one of a 'set', which he defines as a chance union without obligations or sanctions in which anyone can be denounced at any time and for any reason by any other member. As such it remains in the form of an imperfect realisation of an ideal form, of a *Bund* – (that is, of a society opposed both to that based on contract (*Gesellschaft*) or kinship relations (*Gemeinschaft*). The set as distinct from the *Bund* has no stable structures and can potentially collapse at any moment. It is an aggregation based not upon obligations but upon elective affinities. Monnerot's argument is suggestive, but the notion of a set still seems too closed to describe the Surrealist Group: a set generally describes a group united on the basis not of principles but of shared interests. In contrast, the surrealist group is essentially a community which, as will readily be apparent from the documents collected in this volume, is fundamentally moral in nature.

As a free association united in a common cause but with no formal code and actively hostile to any form of proselytisation, can the Surrealist Group be viewed in the context of the history of secret societies? According to Roger Caillouis all such orders were characterised by their conspiratorial nature: they were for initiates, structurally reliant upon initiation rituals that would make access to the society difficult and, once such access had been obtained, withdrawal even more difficult, in some cases impossible. This was the opposite of the Surrealist Group: 'I am not for adepts', wrote André

Breton in one his poems. Although Breton had called in the *Second Manifesto* for the 'profound, veritable occultation of surrealism' and elsewhere had said 'We must keep the public out', nothing was more foreign to his nature than the assumed hierarchical structure that tends to characterise secret societies. What the occultation of surrealism meant was that the activity would be open while remaining hidden from the eyes of the vulgar and the fashionable, an inevitable tightrope. Never once, however, have the surrealists succumbed to the temptation to impose conditions of acceptance into the Surrealist Group: entry to it would always be through the sort of door Marcel Duchamp represented as being open and closed at the same time. Nor have they sought to push surrealist activity in any one particular direction which would establish a collective rationale for group activity.

The Surrealist Group was consequently always more than the sum of its parts, always pressing beyond its own boundaries, always a place of encounter open to all possibilities. There was no restriction placed on its members as to the direction its activities should take. Like the Grail Castle, it would be open to all, but only the chosen would actually be able to see it and find their way into it. Reference to the Grail legend, one of the surrealists' favourite myths, is extremely suggestive in this context. Julien Gracq, indeed, contended that the Surrealist Group functions in the same way as the Round Table of Arthur's court: as a point of departure from and into the world, with surrealism itself (the entrance to the Grail Castle) a distant possibility rather than a realisation. As such it takes form as an elective community established by a shared sense of mystic vocation.⁹

Jean Ferry is even more suggestive in a story clearly based upon his own experience as a member of the Surrealist Group in which he describes a very secret society which it is difficult and perhaps even impossible to join, to the extent that many people spend their whole lives trying in vain to do so. On the other hand, many people are members of it without being aware of the fact, perhaps even without knowing of the society's existence. Others, who might think of themselves as leading members of the society, do not in fact belong to it at all.¹⁰ Here we can see the illumination of what Breton meant by occultation: the creation of a society that would be at once so secret that it would be impossible to penetrate it and yet at the same time so limpid that anyone could at any moment spontaneously discover its most intimate mysteries. As Gracq pointed out, the idea of a secret society was an almost necessary temptation to surrealism, but it represented more a symbolic gesture towards closure than any great desire for secrecy.¹¹ If anything, the idea of a secret society was invoked only to prevent cliques developing within the group.¹²

Like the Arthurian court, too, the Surrealist Group would function quite differently from a secret society. The 'secret' (the Grail, surrealism) would

remain external to the activities of the group itself, and to see the group as constituting an end in itself would be to defeat the purpose of surrealism. To this extent it does share the aspects Monnerot saw as characteristic of a 'set' but it seems to go far beyond them for, while there would be no initiation ritual for entrance, each member would be under an unspoken obligation to uphold the values of the group and would be subject to denunciation at any time and possibly to immediate expulsion. Such expulsion would involve no punishment or anathematising of the person involved, but would be necessary to protect the integrity and vitality of the group: no 'fellowship' was possible; indeed, were it to develop it would be a threat to such integrity. In theory no one was immune from such denunciation.¹³

If this again contrasts with a secret society, the basis of which is protection of the secret to which initiation allows access, and in which the cardinal virtue is loyalty to the group and protection of its secret, it also differs from a set to the extent that it has an aim, that is the quest for the supreme point. While surrealism had no secret to protect (offering no initiation and demanding no loyalty), it did involve a challenge to push the activities of the group to the limit, threatening in the process its dissolution at any moment. Again this resembles the Arthurian fellowship, where the initial challenge instigates a quest to which all members of the circle are committed. To be accepted within the group one has to be chosen, one does not choose, and the criteria for being chosen can never be conceptualised. This means that the Surrealist Group can never transcend the activities of those who comprise it, while surrealism itself, like the Grail, must always transcend such activity. What, then, is this surrealism to which the individual surrealists and collective surrealist groups aspire?

The Belgian surrealist Marcel Mariën has written: 'This word [surrealism] arouses so much confusion that it is impossible, when facing triumphant psittacism, to defend the strict, complicated principles which define the surrealist spirit. Furthermore, these principles are in many respects incommunicable. By this I mean that it's no use striving to understand them from outside, to translate them into a language outside the experience itself – internal daily experience.'¹⁴ The reality of surrealism can therefore by definition only be conceptualised provisionally as an ideal type in the Weberian sense, for this reality exists beyond itself in the form of the 'marker' given by the 'supreme point' as a contrast to daily lived experience. Therefore, while the supreme point is the aim of surrealist activity, there has been a significant degree of ambivalence about its actual attainment, since to realise it would be to renounce life itself. As Breton explained: 'I have spoken of a certain sublime point in the mountain. There was never any question of my going to live at that point. It would, besides, have at that moment ceased to be sublime and I myself a man.'¹⁵ In a similar vein, Aragon defined surrealism as 'at best a notion that slips away

like the horizon before the walker, for like the horizon it is a relation between the sensibility and what it will never attain'. And again, as the French Surrealist Group declared in 1947, surrealism is not what is but 'what will be'.

This quest remains what characterises the surrealist demand beyond all other disagreements, and it retains an extraordinary magnetising power. Most histories and studies tend to emphasise the arguments and splits that have taken place within surrealism. What, however, seems striking is the contrary – how few serious splits there have been and how little lasting rancour has been generated if one considers the level of concentrated collective activity involved. Certainly, alongside, for instance, the contemporaneous Psychoanalytic Movement, with which it may superficially be compared, the Surrealist Movement has remained remarkably cohesive, undergoing no ideological splits¹⁶ to compare with those characterising the former, from the one between Freud and Jung to those generated by the expulsion of Lacan from the Psychoanalytic Association. As Michel Leiris explained: 'You know, people are astonished that surrealist histories often seem frightful, full of exclusions and anathemas. But that came from the fact that surrealism was a passional movement. We treated each other as lovers who argue and drag each other through the mud.'¹⁷

To search for evidence of these perspectives within surrealism, and of the centrality of the collective experience for the movement, one might look no further than the material testimony of surrealist tracts and declarations. As José Pierre argues in the introduction of his painstakingly researched *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives 1922–1969*, its texts in themselves provide a history of Parisian surrealism, charting the group's positions, strategies and activities in a way that was simultaneously internal (since the formulation of collective positions could be a significant part of the group's daily routine) and external (since the resulting texts were aimed at the public domain). Unlike the more ambitious group enterprises through which surrealism is more often considered – magazines, books and exhibitions – this is a history of surrealism as it actually unfolded within a shifting matrix of circumstances, 'on the hoof', precisely because tracts could be written, agreed upon, printed and distributed in a very short space of time (indeed, since they were usually immediate responses to events and situations, this was a prime consideration). The concise form of the collective statement was an opportunity to issue rebukes, corrections and summonses, to continue debate with other groups, or sometimes to mark out significant reference points for approval, but in so doing they also offered the possibility of reemphasising or even revising the first principles of surrealism's challenge. Moreover, since these constantly renewed affirmations of a group position frequently took a critical and even violently hostile stance against specific events, individuals or trends, the tracts might

also be seen to be a means for groups to define themselves not so much negatively as through an overtly dialectical process (championed in the Romanian group text *Dialectics of the Dialectic*) of the 'negation of negation'. Significantly, surrealist tracts allowed the groups to issue this continuing challenge in a highly specific format: the terse, critically engaged statement which was the very antithesis of the literary forms derided by Breton in his first *Manifesto*, but which nevertheless operated with the same fusion of the political and the poetic (not to mention visual, since their graphic presentation was also carefully considered) that were central to surrealism's appeal to Liberty, Poetry and Love.

The process by which tracts were conceived and executed is also highly revealing of the relationship between the individual and the collectivity within surrealism. Typically, once an issue had been identified that might call for a public response from the group, one or more individuals would be asked to draft the text; many of the tracts still bear the evidence of this original authorship (most famously perhaps Artaud's series of incendiary broadsides in issue 3 of *La Révolution surréaliste*).¹⁸ This text would then be brought to the group, read and discussed collectively, and amendments (or perhaps major redrafting) carried out before the tract was finalised. A crucial last element of this process was the collecting of signatures to ratify the statement, and even a cursory analysis of the patterns of these lists of signatures provides telling evidence not only of the key importance of collective solidarity for surrealism, but also of some strong suggestions that surrealist groups were not nearly as homogeneous, clearly defined and inflexible as some critics would like to suggest. At one level, the signatures on the tracts provided an opportunity for the group to express its membership or draw up a roll-call, offering tangible proof to its audience of its massed strength. But not every tract was signed by all group members; indeed, many were signed by just a few individuals, and there may be several reasons for this apparent inconsistency. Firstly, in the case of the Parisian group for example, the signatures of the many foreign members would generally be omitted from any tract liable to stir the very real threat of prosecution or deportation. Secondly, the rapidity with which some of the tracts needed to be drawn up and published may often have prevented the canvassing of endorsement from the widest possible number of collaborators. Finally, and most crucially, it would seem that not all of the tracts were seen as expressing the central concerns of the entire collectivity; within the group, issues might be focused on by smaller numbers of people, and there seems to be no suggestion that signing collective texts was in any way obligatory for individual surrealists who may have disagreed with the spirit or detail of a particular statement.

On the other hand, these lists of signatures might also include names that at first sight do not appear to belong within the surrealist membership.

Tracts were sometimes issued countersigned with other groups (particularly for more overtly political statements), but in some cases – where circumstances indicated that the broadest possible quorum was required on a key issue, for example – names can be found beneath tracts belonging to individuals who only maintained a marginal or even distant relationship with the core group, of individuals who had previously parted company from it, or had even never participated in surrealism at all (most notably the *Declaration on the Right to Insubordination in the Algerian War*). The image of a dogmatic, inflexible surrealist group operating within a rigid membership (and occasionally obliged violently to eject its dissenters) is hard to maintain on the evidence of the Parisian group's own publishing history, which indicates how the collectivity also demanded an open, enquiring and responsive attitude to the culture and intellects around it.

In the same way, the image of André Breton as the sole guardian and guarantor of surrealism's moral and intellectual authority is also challenged in a graphic way by this day-to-day history of the movement. True, Breton's name is almost always present at the foot of the Parisian collective texts; but it is always in the context of, and surrounded by, all those countless other names without whom there could have been no group, and no Surrealist Movement. How then do we account for the special position Breton holds in the history of surrealism? Called the 'Pope', the 'Magus', the 'Arbiter' of surrealism by various enemies and critics, consideration of Breton's position certainly reveals a more subtle presence. Virtually all those who have participated in the Surrealist Group, no matter how bitterly they quarrelled with Breton, agree that his position was never one of a 'pope'. Octavio Paz, rarely a man to use vituperative language, described such a designation as an 'ignoble epithet popularised by certain swine'.¹⁹ The words the surrealists themselves use to characterise Breton's position seem to be words like 'magnetism', 'illumination', 'reflection'. Jean Schuster says that Breton had an authority which, contrary to a leader's, aims 'at the development of ideas through mental stimulation and not their petrification through intimidating others'.²⁰ Even so, the history of the French Surrealist Group until Breton's death in 1966 might be said to have followed the course of a human life, with the enthusiasm of youth being followed by middle-age consolidation and then by decline and death.

Yet, at the beginning of surrealism, it was Artaud as much as Breton who was the dominant personality in the group. Indeed, judging from the daybook kept by the Bureau of Surrealist Research, Breton was not fully convinced of the desirability of continuing the Surrealist Group at all, and there are several entries in which he threatens to withdraw, often complaining about the laziness of colleagues and the neglecting of simple tasks. Antonin Artaud, a troubled individual with a forceful but dogmatic character had, as Breton was later to acknowledge, given surrealist activities

an urgency and a powerful impetus, and this vitality is witnessed by the first three issues of *La Révolution surréaliste*. But Breton recognised that such furious activity was liable soon to burn itself out. In any event it did not provide a basis for sustained collective activity. It was only with issue 4 of *La Révolution surréaliste* that he took over the editorship and imposed a tighter discipline.

From the time Breton assumed the editorship of the journal, he was certainly the central figure of the group. However, this position was not sustained by any authority inherent in him as an individual. It is difficult to see any charismatic quality in his leadership, which was maintained rather by his resolve of purpose. It was above all his moral intransigence that gave him prestige, an intransigence so resolute that he was prepared to break with his closest friends if he felt they had behaved in an unacceptable way. Aragon was later to say: 'People tended to judge AB too hastily by appearances: that commanding air of his, and the impression he gave of always being in the majority.'²¹ Yet it is apparent that Breton's authority was always on the line during this period. He could take nothing for granted. André Thirion has noted that, during the crisis of 1929, it looked for a time like everyone would desert Breton and perhaps establish an alternative surrealist group without him.²² This is a fear also suggested by some of the comments, and especially by the tone, of the *Second Manifesto*; indeed Breton accuses Georges Bataille of trying to form such a group. If Bataille denied any such intention, it seems that those disaffected surrealists who gathered around him would have liked to have formed a separate group to challenge Breton. That this never occurred seems to bear witness more to the lack of organisational capabilities among the dissidents than any lack of will. Like Artaud, Bataille's personality lacked the flexibility of outlook that would have allowed a group to form around him. It is clear that, far from being the dogmatic and authoritarian character too often depicted, it was rather Breton's openness and willingness to invite dissension (even to invite it actively) or different points of view that allowed the Paris group to form and take the shape it did. True, his character was also intransigent and provocative; he was quite capable of denouncing a position that on another occasion he might have supported. This does not reveal inconsistency but rather a will to test the limits of an individual or even of the collectivity itself. Breton's role appears to be almost that of a trickster figure, maintaining coherence among his collaborators by testing them in often unexpected ways. It should also be said that, at least up to the war, Breton's authority was purely nominal. Although he had the power to make decisions on behalf of the group, this was sustainable only if he made them in accord with the group's overall orientation.²³

After the war, however, we see a different pattern emerging. The re-establishment of the group was tortuous. Finding a new orientation that took

account of dramatically changed circumstances proved difficult and led to many comings and goings and much dissension, culminating in the 'Pastoureau Affair' of 1951, perhaps the key split in the history of the group. The crisis broke when Henri Pastoureau, one of the old guard, objected to the presence of Michel Carrouges, a Catholic intellectual who in 1948 had published a sympathetic and intelligent, if tendentious, study of surrealism entitled *André Breton et les données fondamentales du sur-réalisme* (the title itself – equating Breton with surrealism's first principles – infuriated many of the group). Since the Surrealist Group had just reaffirmed its complete rejection of Christian ideas in the broadside *Back to Your Kennels, Yelpers of God* (see pp. 152–5), Carrouges's work certainly seemed to be out of line with surrealist thinking, yet Breton defended him. For reasons that are still not at all clear, it was Pastoureau who found himself under criticism.

There followed a vitriolic polemic which is well documented²⁴ but the import of which is difficult to discern. The most significant thing was that at one point Breton, apparently for the first and only time, pulled rank, saying that if his position was not accepted he would dissolve the Surrealist Group altogether (indeed the crisis this affair engendered could be seen as far more serious than the better-known flashpoints resulting from the defections of individuals such as Aragon and Éluard before the war, since these had precisely concerned only individual positions rather than the very constitution of the group). When the dust had settled, Pastoureau, along with almost the entire pre-war 'old guard', had either withdrawn or been expelled. This meant that the group had been created virtually anew, and the individuals who remained would mostly compose the activists of the group until the next crisis in 1969. To emphasise the extent of the changes that the group went through during this period, of the 14 collective declarations issued from 1947 to 1952, signed by a total of 105 individuals, only two (Breton and Péret) signed both the first and the last.

It would require a study in much greater depth to explore all the implications of these events (and we are hampered by the fact that we still lack any detailed study of this period in surrealist history). Yet in reading the documents, one is struck by Breton's uncharacteristically bullish behaviour. He almost seems to have deliberately behaved in a way that he knew would offend the older members of the group. The impression given is that he wanted to take the opportunity to reconstitute the group on a new basis to take account of the changed post-war situation, and feared that the survivors of the pre-war period would be an encumbrance, insisting on moral exigencies, notably in the political sphere, that Breton no longer considered relevant. Maybe he also wanted to give youth its chance. He always emphasised his faith in youth and he may have considered that the political situation had changed so radically that a new start was needed with young

people unprejudiced by the concerns of the thirties and the war years. But this decision had far-reaching consequences.

Jean Benoît was later to draw a distinction between the inter-war and post-war Surrealist Groups, noting that 'two generations succeeded each other. The first came naturally to surrealism, the second was attracted by surrealism.'²⁵ More than this, though, the second generation was not only attracted by surrealism, but also by the personality of Breton himself. This in itself stamped the post-war Surrealist Group with the personality of Breton in a way the inter-war group had never been, even though Breton became less personally active after 1951. The first generation were surrealists by a natural process of evolution; they did not have to think about what surrealism was and their own place within it. They themselves defined it as commensurate to their own beings and everyday practice: surrealism could only become what they made of it. They had no loyalty towards it or to Breton. For the second generation, however, surrealism was pre-existent: it had its own tradition into which they needed to fit. They could enrich, advance or, most difficult of all, remake it, but they could not ignore this tradition and follow their own path independently of surrealist history. To do so would be to define themselves as not being surrealist. They therefore had to confront something external to themselves and separable from them, and did not have the same freedom to create surrealism that the first generation had enjoyed. This was emphasised by the fact that Breton remained in the group as an authority figure: many of those who joined the group after the war felt a loyalty to its tradition to the extent that the protection of the surrealist heritage was sometimes stronger than their urge to reinvent it.²⁶

It also meant that Breton's position within the group changed after 1951. Whether it had been his intention or not, by dispensing with Pastoureau and his friends he had ensured that his authority was unchallengeable. None of the newcomers was likely to have the confidence to challenge Breton on a major point. The fact that he never actually had to invoke such authority directly does not show that it did not exist, but rather its strength.²⁷ The next 18 years witnessed a period of unaccustomed harmony, with no serious crisis emerging until 1969, but was this harmony as solid as it might initially appear?

In reviewing the situation of surrealism in 1969 following its apparent dissolution, Jean Schuster²⁸ implies that it was not. As Breton's executor, charged with overseeing the well-being of the group, Schuster was in a unique position to review its situation at this historical juncture. He sees the crisis emerging in 1969 as the inevitable result of Breton's death: no one had the authority to hold together the disparate individuals comprising the group and therefore it crumbled to dust. If this is true, it suggests an image of Breton as no longer presiding over a vibrant Round Table, but

having become the wounded and sterile Fisher King, with his knights living with illusions of lost glories, and surrealism itself isolated in its purity and lost in the time and space of a wasteland.

Such an image is not without an element of truth. Surrealism is not exempt from the maxim given by Friedrich Schlegel that 'only that which annihilates itself is of value'. In failing to annihilate himself along with Pastoureaux and his friends in 1951, Breton might be said to have only half completed the essential task and left his entourage in thrall to a wounded healer. Yet, it would be erroneous to infer from this that surrealism had, as the critics would like to believe (and as if to stigmatise surrealism's remarkable longevity in comparison to almost any other intellectual current of the period), merely been living through a lingering death after the Second World War and was put out of its misery in 1969. In fact, the vitality of the Surrealist Group after the war is surely apparent in the documents in this collection. If the Surrealist Group during the fifties and sixties may no longer have been at the centre of intellectual debate in France, and if it may have been under the tutelage or guidance of Breton, whose personality placed some boundaries upon its ethical concerns, in terms of its range of activities it was as vibrant as it had ever been: youthful energy still animated it and it seemed to have a power to renew itself while retaining a consistent capacity for moral discernment based upon a much more firmly based collective sensibility than had been apparent in the inter-war period. In its publications there is little sign of nostalgia for a lost past or glory, but rather a deepening of surrealist concerns: they may not have been as intrepid in their pursuit of the surrealist Grail as the earlier generation, but times had changed and different exigencies faced them.²⁹

In this respect, Schuster may be right to assert that Breton's personality during his lifetime had the positive influence on the group he describes but was this really based upon foundations of dust, with a vitality maintained only by the presence of Breton and fated to collapse when the master died? We may beg to differ. Indeed, the immediate aftermath of Breton's death appears to have given the Surrealist Group second breath: between 1966 and 1969 they published seven issues of one of their most original journals, *L'Archibras*, organised the major exhibition *The Pleasure Principle* in 1968, and put on an impressive show of unity during that year, when surrealist hopes seemed to be coming to fruition in the continuing Cuban Revolution, in the Prague Spring and in the May events in Paris. All the evidence suggests that, if Breton's death was experienced as a death within the group, it was rather as an alchemical bathing in the fires of primal matter, from which it would re-emerge replenished like the phoenix.

By the end of 1968, however, these flames had been doused. The general assumption is that the Parisian group's 'auto-dissolution' of 1969, signalled by Schuster's text *The Fourth Canto*, was the inevitable consequence of

Breton's death three years earlier. But if it is now apparent that by 1969 one phase of the history of French surrealism had been brought to an end, this should rather be seen in the context of the more general failure of the hopes for radical change raised by the events of May '68, in which surrealists had all excitedly participated. The phoenix had taken flight in an atmosphere in which everything seemed to be brightness, before having a seizure that caused its sudden collapse; but if this was a death, it is now apparent that it was one having far wider consequences than for surrealism alone: it was the death of the whole radical tradition of which surrealism was a part. This is already marked by the document from 1968, *Portrait of the Enemy* (see pp. 132–4). Although written as a call to action, in retrospect this now reads more as an uncanny anticipation of the coming of forces of reaction that would soon come to dominate all spheres of contemporary life. Contrary to Schuster's argument, if Breton's presence had undoubtedly restrained the tensions which any group inevitably experiences, all the evidence suggests that the surrealists made remarkable efforts to confront this and establish a new framework for their activities, as set out in *The Platform of Prague*, drawn up in collaboration with the Czechoslovak surrealists and the most detailed collective declaration they had ever made. Its promises, however, were not to be fulfilled; within a year the French Surrealist Group would be in tatters and the Czech group reduced to clandestinity.

This crisis of 1969 did not mean the end of the surrealism in Paris. Schuster himself tried to gather the dissidents around the journal *Coupure* into a new group that would maintain collective activities without laying claim to being a Surrealist Group. This initiative collapsed within a couple of years, and a small group remained who worked together under the name 'Maintenant'. In addition, other groups formed on the margins, most notably those around Jimmy Gladiator, an enthusiastic motivator of energies, which laid claim to the heritage of surrealism without actually calling themselves 'surrealists'. However, not everyone accepted the 'liquidatory gesture' represented by Schuster's article in *Le Monde*. Vincent Bounoure, who would become the key figure for 'orthodox' surrealism, organised an enquiry into its future, *Rien ou quoi?*, which elicited a vast range of responses published privately in 1970. As a result, the French Surrealist Group regrouped and continues to the present day. Its evolution is traced in three journals, *Bulletin de liaison surréaliste* (1971–76); *Sur-réalisme* (1977) and *SURR...* (1992 to date) and most especially in the collective volume published under the auspices of Vincent Bounoure in 1976, *La Civilisation surréaliste*, a sustained attempt to re-examine surrealist priorities in the light of changing circumstances. Surrealism continues to exist, too, through the activities of groups currently active in Prague, Stockholm, Leeds, Madrid, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires and Chicago among others.

Evaluating this activity is not within the purview of the current work. Whether the surrealist moment has passed or is yet to come, however, we might say that any effort to maintain a space for collective activity is to be welcomed in a society like ours that unremittingly tramples all values of human sympathy and solidarity underfoot. To this extent, the message of surrealism retains its dynamic. Even submerged, even reduced to silence, it will remain a shadow presence, a potentiality of ‘otherness’ within which may – no matter how wretched objective conditions may appear – attain its realisation at any moment. In this respect is surrealism, as an early ‘visiting card’ asked, ‘the genius of communism’?

NOTE ON THE SELECTION OF TEXTS

In making this selection, we have tried to bring together collective surrealist texts with the intention of emphasising their continuing relevance for contemporary debates, rather than attempting a documentary record of surrealist collective activity. José Pierre has already done the latter for the Parisian group with his meticulously edited and annotated *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives*, and any serious researcher into surrealism will turn to the two volumes of this standard work, whose only weaknesses, in our opinion, are the editor's belief that the collective adventure of surrealism came to an end in 1969, and in the limitation of documents to those of the French group.

We have sought to bring attention to the collective and international dimension of surrealism, as reflected in its thematic considerations to the present day. Inevitable space considerations have meant that we have had to restrict the material that might have been included. Since the French group has been historically the heart of surrealism, French texts form the core of the present volume; it is their documents that predominate, and there are many international groups that we have been unable to represent. We have concentrated on those texts of an indisputable collective character that also have substantive content; as a result, we have omitted texts of an anecdotal or circumstantial nature, or those devoted to internal discussions or arguments, as well as collective homages (writings by individuals collected together in a group context). We have also excluded – if with a somewhat heavy heart – Breton and Trotsky's famous *For an Independent Revolutionary Art* which again emanates from the individuals concerned rather than from the collective environment of the surrealism of the time, even though, like all surrealist writing, it would have been impossible without – and no doubt distantly partakes of – that collective spirit. On the other hand we have included *Dialectics of the Dialectic* which, although signed only by Gherasim Luca and Trost, clearly emerges directly from the collective activity of the Romanian Surrealist Group as a whole, and impinges upon the very nature of the surrealist quest. We have also taken the decision not to include any of the enthusiastic statements of the Chicago Surrealist Group, since these are already in English and are now readily available.

While we have been obliged to exclude several important documents that might otherwise have found a place here, readers are directed to a number of sources in which further surrealist tracts can be found in English. The list below indicates only those texts not included in the present volume:

André Breton: What is Surrealism?, edited and introduced by Franklin Rosemont (London: Pluto Press, 1978):

Telegram to Moscow; Manifesto on *L'Âge d'or* (excerpts); *International Surrealist Bulletin*, no. 4 (excerpts); Declaration VVV; At Last!; Letter to Don C. Talayesva, Hopi Sun Chief; We Don't EAR It That Way; The Iniquitous Way; Letter to the Surrealists of the United States.

Maurice Nadeau, *The History of Surrealism*, translated by Richard Howard (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968):

A Corpse; Open Letter to M. Paul Claudel; With Your Permission; Hands Off Love.

Paul Hammond (ed.), *The Shadow and its Shadow: Surrealist Writings on the Cinema* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1991):

Hands Off Love; Manifesto of the Surrealists Concerning *L'Âge d'or*; *Malombra*, Aura of Absolute Love; Data Towards the Irrational Enlargement of a Film: *The Shanghai Gesture*.

Franklin Rosemont (ed.), *The Forecast is Hot* (Chicago: Black Swan Press, 1997):

Complete tracts of the Surrealist Group based in Chicago from 1966–76 with a wealth of other material relating to the collective activities of US surrealists. A second volume is promised, bringing the story up to date.

1 THE HISTORICAL ORIENTATION OF SURREALISM

As the introduction suggests, a collection of surrealist tracts and collective declarations constitutes a kind of history of surrealism in itself, offering a graphic overview of both the wider and day-to-day concerns, positions and strategies of the groups involved. Taken as a whole, not only do they indicate the ambitious scope of surrealism's chosen areas of activity – from rationales for new magazines or introductions to exhibitions to proposals for artistic experiment (*Dialectics of the Dialectic*), from statements on dream and the unconscious (the introduction to *La Révolution surréaliste*) or moral exigencies and individual revolt (*High Frequency*) to those of a directly social and political engagement (*Inaugural Rupture*) – but they also begin to give the reader an idea of the sheer scale of its project and the large numbers of its participants: the texts in this section span a period of over six decades and represent only a fraction of the groups' output (José Pierre's anthology of French surrealist tracts alone contains over 250 texts).

The writings of this first section are intended to begin to give a sense of this historical project, bringing together some key surrealist statements of intent and definitions (or redefinitions) of its challenges. Perhaps surprisingly, the French Surrealist Group issued relatively few benchmark texts (of which *The Platform of Prague*, signed jointly in 1968 with surrealists in Prague, was perhaps the first with this explicit aim). This may be partly because the two *Surrealist Manifestos* (written by André Breton alone, but fully ratified by the entire group) largely satisfied the requirements for defining the French group's position, and partly because on the whole the group's comparatively secure access to publication and public activity favoured a series of successive appeals on specific issues rather than major restatements of the movement's philosophy. This contrasts with groups such as those in Bucharest or Prague, for example, which endured long periods of precarious and hostile circumstances; but it is interesting to note that not only could their texts such as *Dialectics of the Dialectic* and *The Possible Against the Current* represent defining statements of hard-won surrealist positions, but they were also not afraid, where necessary, to use these as a forum for a rigorous auto-critique of surrealism's aims and means. Texts from the Prague group appear here *in extenso* precisely because they

count among surrealism's most sustained attempts to analyse and define its own ideology, and are especially important for any current assessment of surrealism, since they engage directly with its essential qualities.

The first issue of La Révolution surréaliste was introduced by this declaration which gives a clear and succinct initiation into the first principles of surrealism. With the exaltation of the creativity of dreams and its possibility of undermining the foundations of a realist interpretation of the nature of reality, it also suggests the collective foundation of the surrealist endeavour, since dreams are the locus for shared understanding in many societies. In this document, the major surrealist aim of redrafting a new 'declaration of the rights of humanity', in which a re-evaluation of the dream experience became its first article of incorporation.

INTRODUCTION TO LA RÉVOLUTION SURRÉALISTE

With the trial of knowledge having become irrelevant, with intelligence no longer being taken seriously, it is dream alone that allows mankind all its rights to liberty. Thanks to dream, death's meaning is no longer obscure and the meaning of life no longer touches us.

Each morning, in every family, men, women and children, IF THEY HAVE NOTHING BETTER TO DO, tell each other their dreams. We are all at the mercy of dream, and we owe it to ourselves to submit to its powers in our waking state. It is a terrible tyrant dressed in mirrors and lightning. What are pen and paper, what is writing, what is poetry, faced with this giant who bears the muscles of the clouds in its muscles? You stand there gibbering before the serpent, unaware of the dead leaves and glass traps, fearful for your fortune, your heart and your pleasures, and you seek all the mathematical signs which might make death more natural to you in the shadow of your dreams. Others, and these are the prophets, lead the forces of night blindly towards the future, dawn speaks through their mouths, and the delighted world takes fright or congratulates itself. Surrealism opens the doors of dream to all those for whom night is miserly. Surrealism is the crossroads of the enchantments of sleep, alcohol, tobacco, ether, opium, cocaine and morphine. But it is also the breaker of chains: we do not sleep, we do not drink, we do not smoke, we do not inhale, we do not inject ourselves but we dream, and the speed of the lamps' needles introduces into our brains the marvellous deflowered sponge of gold. Ah, if bones were inflated like airships, we would visit the hidden places of the Dead Sea! The path is a sentry standing tall against the wind, enlacing us and making us tremble before our fragile ruby appearance. You, glued to the echoes of our ears like the octopus-clock in the wall of time, you can invent wretched stories which make us smile nonchalantly. We are no longer troubled, say what you like: *the idea of movement is above all an inert idea* (Berkeley),

and the tree of speed appears to us. The brain twists like an angel and our words are the pellets of lead which kill the bird. You to whom nature has given the power to turn on the electricity at noon and linger under the rain with the sun in your eyes, your acts are gratuitous, ours are dreamed. Everything is whisperings, coincidences, silence and sparks delight their own revelation. The tree laden with meat which thrusts between the paving slabs is only supernatural in our amazement, but in the time it takes to close your eyes it awaits inauguration.

Since every discovery changes nature, the destination of an object or a phenomenon constitutes a surrealist fact. Between Napoleon and the phrenological bust in his likeness are all the battles of the Empire. Far be it from us to exploit these images and alter them in a direction that might suggest a belief in progress. Whether the distillation of a liquid produces alcohol, milk or lamp gas, they are just so many satisfying images and worthless inventions. No transformation has taken place yet, an invisible ink, the writer will be counted among the missing. Solitude of love, the man lying on you commits a perpetual and fatal crime. Solitude of writing, you will no longer be known in vain, your victims, seized by a trap of violent stars, are revived in themselves.

We observe the surrealist exaltation of mystics, inventors and prophets and we move on.

Besides, you will find in this journal accounts of inventions, fashion, life, fine arts and magic. Fashion will be considered according to the gravitation of white letters on nocturnal flesh, life according to the partitions of day and of perfumes, invention according to players, the arts according to the puppet that says 'storm' to the bells of the century-old cedar, and magic according to the movement of the spheres in blind eyes.

Already the automata multiply and dream. In the cafés, they urgently request writing materials, the veins of marble are the charts of their escape and their cars go to the Bois without them.

Revolution... Revolution... Realism prunes trees, surrealism prunes life.

J. A. Boiffard, P. Éluard, R. Vitrac.

December 1924

The meeting in Paris of 27 January 1925 sanctioned the shared nature of surrealism in what may be said to be its first authentically collective manifestation (that is, one in which a common perspective was developed in a collective way). Apparently written primarily by Antonin Artaud at the moment he assumed directorship of the Bureau of Surrealist Research, it may also be said to be the only document of early surrealism that seeks explicitly to clarify the nature of surrealism in its collective sense.

DECLARATION OF 27 JANUARY 1925

In view of a false interpretation of our endeavour that has stupidly been circulated among the public.

We insist on declaring to the whole of stumbling contemporary literary criticism, whether it be dramatic, philosophical, exegetical and even theological.

1. We have nothing to do with literature,
But when necessary we are as capable as anyone else of making use of it.
2. SURREALISM is not a new or easier means of expression, nor even a metaphysics of poetry;
It is a total means of complete liberation of the mind
and all that resembles it.
3. We are determined to make a Revolution.
4. We have joined the word SURREALISM with the word REVOLUTION merely to show the disinterested, detached and even completely desperate character of this revolution.
5. We do not claim to change anything about people's morals, but we aim to show the fragility of their thoughts, and on what shifting foundations, on what cellars, they have affixed their tottering houses.
6. We fling this solemn preliminary warning at society:
Beware your deviations, we'll not miss any of the blunders made by your spirit.
7. Society will find us at each bend of its thought.
8. We are specialists in Revolt.
There is no means of action we are incapable, when necessary, of using.
9. We say to the Western world in particular:
SURREALISM exists
- But what is this new *ism* that is now attached to us?
- SURREALISM is not a poetic form.
It is a cry of the mind as it turns back towards itself and is determined to smash its fetters,
if necessary with material hammers.

THE BUREAU OF SURREALIST RESEARCH, 15 rue de Grenelle
Louis Aragon, Antonin Artaud, Jacques Baron, Joë Bousquet, J. A. Boiffard, André Breton, Jean Carrive, René Crevel, Robert Desnos, Paul Éluard, Max Ernst, T. Fraenkel, Francis Gérard, Michel Leiris, Georges Limbour, Mathias Lübeck, Georges Malkine, André Masson, Max Morise, Pierre Naville, Marcel Noll, Benjamin Péret, Raymond Queneau, Philippe Soupault, Dédé Sunbeam, Roland Tual.

For a while the Yugoslav Surrealist Group promised to be the most important group outside France as it developed a characteristic identity in its collective activities in the years from 1929 to 1938, publishing its own journal, Nadrealizam danas i ovde (Surrealism Here and Now) and generating an intense body of work between 1929 and 1933, when the arrest of four of its members for subversive activity severely circumscribed collective work. This activity remains very poorly documented even in French, and this is the group's major manifesto. Those who remained in Yugoslavia during the war became involved with Tito's resistance movement, Koča Popović becoming one of his most trusted lieutenants and for many years his designated successor. Marco Ristić was also associated with Tito's regime as the first Yugoslavian ambassador to France.

THE POSITION OF SURREALISM

One entire world against another.

The world of infinite dialectic and dynamic concretisation against the world of mortuary metaphysics and static and slurred abstraction. The world of mankind's liberation and the irreducibility of the spirit against the world of constraint, reduction, moral and other castration. The world of irresistible disinterest against the world of possession, comfort and conformism, pitiful personal happiness, mediocre egoism and every kind of compromise.

In spite of everything, this voracious conflict at the level of man and mankind morally summons each person today, without exception or mercy. This is more than a fact; it is a determining factor.

This conflict is not the abstract internal opposition of temporal and eternal man, it is not a dilemma or an antinomy in the area of purely theoretical speculation, by that very fact leading to the avoidance of concrete and virulent collisions, whose solution would leave everything in its place and demand of mankind only resignation and the acceptance of the supposed eternal limits of its nature. We do not believe in an *a priori* knowledge of these limits, their totally unjustified instigation is simply one form of repression directed against those who do not yet have available the means to allow them to strive, once and for all, for everything accessible to mankind. Neither do we believe in the possibility of human resignation faced with the success or failure of any kind of overthrow, in its capitulation, either before or afterwards. Those who believe in it only delude themselves, in the confines of this collapsing world, or else have really become insensible to all insubordination, blind to all mankind's pessimism, a mankind which wants at all costs to exist without being broken, or not to exist at all. Not for one moment could we dissociate the indissoluble unity of eternal and temporal man.

From this perspective, the problem of mankind and its life in society is not for us the antithesis of mankind in general and society in general – we

know nothing about this – but the antithesis of a certain mankind, today's mankind, and of a certain society, today's society. We thus discover this conflict in a concrete collision, occurring in specific places, and we cannot ignore this observation. This problem plunges its roots into the ground of certain material events, where it is expressed at the current time in a way best and most decisively defined where it undeniably resolves itself and where it will be resolved. Its resolution inevitably leads to extreme decisions, that is to the transformation of the very conditions which provoked it. If, in deepening it, this conflict can still appear inextinguishable, it is only because mankind, this denominator of the universe, is incommensurable and irreducible.

And we do not consider this conflict as unfolding in a special domain, even an economic one, leaving untarnished and infallible the so-called transcendence and independence of the spirit and thought in relation to society. Neither do we believe in either immobile or isolated systems, no more than in the independent functioning of mankind's particular faculties, although we would consider the methodological determinism of its particular activities indispensable, since this alone allows us to avoid confusion, and any transformation and shift of the centre of gravity and the fulcrum would be immoral and unpardonable. At any moment, in any place, when it is a question of genuine transmutation and of mankind's authentic activity, we see the latter committed *entirely, for the transformation of relations from top to bottom is the only moral measure of mankind's real achievement.*

This moral criterion, which we highlight particularly and on which we will continue ceaselessly to insist as being most decisive, does not depend on any static establishment of good and bad, but is conditioned by processes of dialectical *becoming*, by the subversive development of mankind's achievement. Deriving from mankind's original, instinctive and fundamentally irreducible exigencies, this moral principle is drawn and draws us irresistibly, and with an increasingly clear consciousness of the integrality and indivisibility of a complex and contradictory reality, towards the absolute of an ultimate, forever renewed, idea of liberty. At least once it should be understood that we hold ourselves responsible only before this revolutionary moral determinism alone.

The common significance of the different aspects, expressions and perspectives of our activity, as well as the unity of our individual particularities, must not be sought in some static and theoretical system conceived in advance, nor in some preliminary and artificial concordance which might generalise and conciliate everything. Our action finds this common significance, this homogeneity, this unity, only in its dialectical development, through which it subordinates itself to the *revolutionary processes of moral determinism*. And, in consequence, defining the moral attitude of surrealism by this declaration, in this moment and in the given

circumstances, we highlight the external differentiation and the internal unification of all our acts and manifestations which, if considered separately and from a static point of view, perhaps do not always reveal themselves in their true and complete sequence. Surrealism represents an active and effective confrontation, a *flagrant co-ordination* of certain subversive methods and doctrines and certain individual negations and particular wills, expressed totally and irrevocably. This co-ordination is not the conciliating summation of characteristics or the quest for a hackneyed equation for everyone and no one, but a dramatic mediation and, in this dialectical 'interpenetration' of the contraries 'Durchdringung der Gegensätze', and in this calculation of all consequences, an incandescent draining and annihilation, remorseless and definitive, of everything that has no place in the mechanism of concrete and universal development.

Riveted to the inflexible levers of this mechanism. These levers: ourselves, perhaps, or even all people. Struck by this perilous and incoercible moral machinery of development. At each instant its dynamic moment ever more conscious. And to the very marrow forced to respond indefatigably to its mysterious and fateful summons. Which do not absolve.

And all contingent forms of our expression, and what haunts us in every realm, are cast into the steel jaws of dialectic, from the untamable pulses of revolt to the march towards the mysteriously luminous blind spot of the mental retina where finally, cast out into the intemporal, all contradictions would efface themselves and would already be annihilated, are only incarnations of this necessity to *respond*.

The gnashing of teeth, the disgust and long white gloves. To be disgusted, to deny – a humanity tragically deceived, restrained by degraded and prostituted thought and by the angelic hypocrisy of blinkered formulae ('my kingdom is not of this world': this alone already suffices to condemn the infamy of those who have sold out the spirit). A carnival hearse lumbers by, surrounded with skipping marionettes in livery and intellectual basset hounds, to the sound of accompanying music made to deafen and cretinise us, so we should not notice that this falsely triumphal and multicoloured cortège is definitely nothing other than the burial of a cadaverous and mummified age through the icy and gaping void of human lives – and to stare in contemplation at the persistence of the marvellous and total realisation. To invoke the Marquis de Sade, Hegel, Lautréamont, not forgetting Vappa, Weifert and Velmar Yancović. To be possessed without respite by the *logic* of freedom, by the frenzy, by the infinite, and remember: 'No Smoking', 'Do not lean out of the window', 'Turn right', 'No entry'. To recommend voluntary scandal, provocation, demoralisation and require the gravity and rigorous and elementary honesty of all words and actions. To thrash R. Drainatz and attend to the heart of dream, to be in the reality of dream. To reject all these foul and fine great literatures and write poems.

Not to be able to tear oneself from the unique shadow of the Total Problem, and the humour, that humour forged over the anvil of pessimism. To live irremediable despair and the sour hope of social determination. All of this. All of this. And everything else.

It is high time for mankind not to demand but to assume its rights. On the path of *mankind's concretisation*, this ideal integration of our total insistence, it appears to us clearly that faced with anything on this path that might signify an obstacle or hitch, our revolt can only take the character of an incessant, violent and destructive action. As absolute as this limited aim would be, which proves itself only in the very march towards it, and which renews itself in this progression, as inaccessible as it might be, so much the more our intention could not fail to take the form of an ever more clear, ever more taut and ever more precise expression against everything by which mankind is systematically diverted from its profound, threatening and true moral content. And all this finally summons us before the necessity for a general overturning of the world, the sole thing today in which we feel called upon to collaborate. And on this path of the totalisation of mankind's desire or its perdition, we are ready to accept the only real directives dictated by the given and material conditions of this disruption, which excludes everything arbitrary, all moral instability and all intellectual comings and goings.

Beginning with the most elementary requirements of individuals, with this wild and implacable breath of liberty and the instincts, of this true source of all revolt, we nevertheless know that any abstract – that is, individual – solution is impossible today. For we think true revolt never stays on the level of its momentary expression, where inevitably it degenerates into inoffensive automatism, which reaches no one and nothing. Submitting itself to the dialectic appropriate to it, it must, in deepening its nature, seek its root and its concrete and limited expression (which is not only the negation of a whole world of relations, but also the destruction of the conditions which really provoke this revolt and which are not necessarily visible in its direct causes). This deepening leads it to combine with a vaster, more efficacious play of negations, and to adhere, at the level of materialist dialectic, to the construction of a system of transformation of the real conditions of existence, a system that nothing would hold back. We also affirm that 'the philosophers have until now only interpreted the world. The point, however, is to change it.'

Fully conscious of mankind's situation in the world and of all the entangled relations resulting from it, and also of the decisive determinations conditioning this consciousness, convinced that only a single extreme and dialectical point of view, only a single moral activity, exists, one that corresponds to the determinism of becoming, committed to pushing each problem to its conclusion, and each action to its final consequences, we

know that revolt is the expression and the consciousness, cause and consequence of this conflict, in which we inevitably take part, we thus know that we have no choice and that nothing could justify our failure to attain all its concrete and supreme consequences.

Oskar Davičo, Milan Dedinac, Djordje Jovanović, Djordje Kostić, Dušan Matić, Koča Popović, Petar Popović, Marco Ristić, Aleksandar Vučo, Vane Živanović-Bor, Živanović-Noe.
Belgrade, 23 December 1930

This letter written by the members of the wartime French group to André Breton gives an insight into the situation of surrealist activists in occupied France, and the presence they managed to maintain despite the exile of the majority of the movement's major figures (recounted by Michel Fauré in his excellent Histoire du surréalisme sous l'occupation). Surrealists in Paris remained remarkably active during the war (and also suffered greatly: eight of the group died at the hands of the Nazis. Bureau, Arnaud and Chabrun were in fact all arrested by the Abwehr – the secret police of the German army – after a search of their homes revealed the draft of this compromising letter. Apparently they owed their lives to rivalry between the Abwehr and the Gestapo). The sections omitted here discuss the climate of compromise in wartime literary circles, and the group's frustrated attempts to engage with former surrealists such as Éluard; the letter itself never seems to have reached Breton.

LETTER TO ANDRÉ BRETON

Dear Breton

We learn that a letter from you has reached Paul Éluard, via one of your Swiss friends. This sign of life we had all been awaiting for nearly three years, with an impatience mixed with anguish, seems however, from what we have been told, to risk leading to misunderstandings due to the lack of information made alas so plausible by your distance. This is why we have decided to chance sending this letter in which we shall try and recap as succinctly and precisely as possible the general situation we have had to face, a highly complex situation as you can imagine, both as residents in an occupied country and as militants who – despite recent events – have decided to keep open the channels of surrealist thought.

We know and have never stopped repeating that, despite your absence, and more than anyone, you represented this thought. In other words, while we understand the reasons for your absence, all the same we regret it. For, in the total chaos of the defeat, you have not even had the opportunity to get to know personally the majority of those who, a few months later, had to accept the honour and the risks of continuing a work that had hitherto seemed to be crystallised in the purest form around your name and those of your

friends who had remained true to you right up to the quayside in Marseille. It was a double risk, since on the one hand this activity, in order to be seen through honestly, had to be carried out without any concession towards those who had driven you into exile, and on the other, separated from you by the same prison walls in which we are trapped even more than by the thousands of miles of patrolled ocean, we also risk being one day rejected by the very man around whose thought we mean to mount vigilant guard.

At the start of 1941 a few of us came together who, while in general being too young to have participated in the surrealist movement before 1939, were nevertheless not old enough to be resigned to detaching ourselves through intellectual fatigue, opportunism or through fear of displeasing the conquerors who were bringing us, with organised stupefaction, a hatred of 'degenerate' art or of any intellectual activity capable of provoking in the most diverse spheres the slightest reaction other than strict obedience and resignation to stupidity and force.

You know what a discouraging atmosphere prevailed at that time in the former free zone. Hardly had the weapons been sheathed or thrown down, than they unleashed their religious arms instead. And one could say that in 1940, '41 and '42, despite so many false rumours, in Paris the situation was if not better then at least much clearer, and there we rightly felt ourselves to be closer to the misfortune the war had heaped upon us, and better placed to fight it in the open than in that filthily bandaged-up, simultaneously stupidly vengeful and servile so-called free zone. In Paris, however, the silence was absolute. From the old group there remained just a few scattered and inactive individuals; others sometimes returned from captivity or else from the free zone, bringing back ever more alarming news about the mystical-cretinising nature of the intellectual activities on display down there, channelled through sub-prefecture magazines or pre-war no-hopers taking a revenge only defeat could offer them.

In Belgium and in Paris, a handful of us decided not to permit those who ever since 1924 had been continually repeating that surrealism was dead even the tiny pleasure of being right in the forties. But to act, to prove our existence, it was necessary to maintain a more or less accessible publication. Our first collective attempt, in May 1941, was anonymous. The adjective 'surrealist' was avoided for this publication so as not to give rise to a provocation that everything at the time would have made us fear. In fact, although our publications did not provoke any censorship at all (one must bear in mind the extraordinary confusion that paradoxically parallels a system of repression that is, moreover, appalling), the few critics who dared, either in Belgium or France, to speak favourably about it nevertheless wasted no time in accusing us of surrealist orthodoxy and in criticising this attitude, claiming to be amazed (here we are quoting almost word for word Rolland de Renéville) that the only young writers currently displaying

any worth and talent should rely on such outdated formulae and refuse to do 'something new'. As one of us subsequently replied, 'It is revolutionary to know how to retain what needs retaining and to renew what needs renewing. The motto "Something new! Something new!" is a Dada motto, a reactionary one.'

The conditions in which we were obliged to live and act were not such as to allow us a raucous, let alone scandalous activity. This is why we decided to stick to a kind of encyclopaedic level, avoiding above all any polemics with current affairs so as to be better able publicly to maintain the current of surrealist thought in the domain of poetry, independently of other more directly successful activities pursued by those of us who had the possibility of doing so. This second condition was all the more important since, by tacit agreement, we had never accepted – we had moreover never had to do so – anyone in our ranks who did not satisfy or was not prepared to satisfy the requirements and necessities of this kind of activity that of course for us takes precedence over merely poetic activity.

Please believe, however, that it is of great importance that even those critics most ill-disposed towards us admit that the sole young poets or theorists worth noting, *despite being surrealists*, might have been people who at first avoided even uttering the name surrealism, and did not officially lay claim to it until around September '41. For after only a few months' existence, our group found itself not only being labelled the only surrealist group active in Europe, but also the only one capable of speaking in the name of surrealism, even though none of its initiators had been involved in the life of the pre-war surrealist group before the occupation, at least not publicly. Mere caretakers of an idea provisionally reduced to inactivity, we thus had to widen our action to the level of the role expected of us. [. . .]

Our sole task is and remains to prevent those few values from perishing in the whirlpool of mud from which, when the time comes, we can expect to turn the inevitable storms towards the destruction of everything that opposes mankind's freedom. For we still believe, with a fervour that is made daily more resolute by our misfortunes, that the liberation of the spirit is inseparable from social liberation, and that in this regard only surrealist activity is still and always capable of offering us the guarantees of the most indispensable intellectual effectiveness and rigour.

There is a time to prepare arms, and a time to use them. We do not intend to arrive on the day of the battle with rusty or, worse still, blunt weapons. This is why we have decided to continue action, even if it is by taking advantage of this period of 'calm' to devote ourselves in some way to a veritable poetic training destined to maintain our discipline and our contact with reality. In fact, we have done more than this or, better still, have been forced to do more and to turn ourselves into real 'irregulars' for surrealism

in Europe (this expression is not only, believe us, a simple comparative term, but you will understand that we cannot say more here).

In fact, and moreover to sum up, it is already a historical fact that if it had not been for a few young men (the age of the main activists varied from 18 to 30) continuing surrealist activity in spite of everything and against all odds, the falsifiers of the state who for years now have 'for these inadmissible reasons' spread the rumour that surrealism was dead could have finally boasted the coveted title of undertakers, without the corpse, were it not for their attitude of the refusal of any such burial, offering them the only appropriate denial possible.

When events take such a turn that they will bring about your return and that of your friends, no doubt we shall forget the meaning of the work we undertook on either side, and that will perhaps seem to us more like a necessary defiance in the face of the constraints of oppression or of exile than a properly revolutionary work in the constructive sense of the term, which it will then be incumbent upon us to see to fruition. For we have no doubt that our efforts, joined together at last, will launch surrealism on a new and – with fresh circumstances – triumphant path.

As for us in any case, we are conscious of having saved surrealism from history. We have kept the word alive. On the day we can join in your efforts, our current task will be over. We are ready to disappear. After us, victory.

Noël Arnaud, Jacques Bureau, Jean-François Chabrun, Marc Patin.
Paris, 14 July 1943

During and immediately after the war, the Romanian Surrealist Group engaged in an intense and often extraordinary collective activity, exemplified by this key surrealist text signed by Trost and Gherasim Luca that suggests a critical reappraisal of the surrealist project and sets out proposals for future developments. Poignantly signalling their complete isolation from other contemporary surrealist comrades, it appears not to have made a great impact at the time within the international movement, even though its authors both subsequently came to live in Paris after the group's collapse in 1947 as Romania became a Stalinist regime; several of its themes, however, were to exert a considerable influence on Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus.

DIALECTICS OF THE DIALECTIC: A MESSAGE ADDRESSED TO THE INTERNATIONAL SURREALIST MOVEMENT

This appeal is made to our surrealist friends, dispersed throughout the world, and as with major shipwrecks we signal our precise position: 44°5' latitude north and 26° longitude east.

The inexhaustible diversity of cretinising means at the disposal of the enemies of the dialectical development of thought and of action, and the

oceans of blood bearing witness to the current cessation of objective evolution, will never, even for a moment, be enough to distract us from the red thread of reality.

Despite the snares surrounding us, we refuse to slip into the errors – as theoretical as they are material – that each time assume a new appearance whose aim, through their immediate, moral or quantitative aspects, is to distract us from our fundamental desire whose first known stage is to transform desire into the reality of desire.

Separated from our friends since the imperialist world war started, we still have no news about them. But we have always cherished the secret hope that on this planet where our existence seems daily to become more untenable, the real functioning of thought has never ceased to motivate the group which holds in its hands the highest ideological liberty ever to exist: the international surrealist movement.

We appeal especially to André Breton, sending him our most fervent message, as at the same time we address the international surrealist movement, giving details of some of our theoretical conclusions from these past years of solitude, in the indefatigable pursuit of new dialectical solutions which will allow us to surpass the excruciating conflict existing between us and the world.

As surrealists, we have continued to envisage the possibility of these permanent confrontations between interior reality and exterior reality in our adherence to dialectical materialism, in the historical destiny of the international proletariat and in the sublime theoretical conquests of surrealism.

If the Surrealist Movement was able to react swiftly to the right-wing deviations which surrounded or threatened it, deviations of political or artistic opportunism, prior to 1939, when we last received information, we believe that it is also time to address certain errors which have crept into surrealism itself. Although less visible, these errors seem to us just as dangerous for the dialectical development of thought. Therefore, before moving on to present our detailed discussion, we feel we should indicate certain existing tendencies within surrealism in recent years, tendencies which little by little risk compromising communal effort.

We can group these *artistic* deviations, ideologically linked to the surrealist movement, under the following general headings: the gradual transformation of objective discoveries into means of artistic production, and the attempt to propagate in a cultural way a given state of the development of surrealist thought.

We do not believe we are alone in raising fears about the existence over the last few years of what might be called a ‘surrealist landscape’.

We have in mind not the improper use of surrealism, which started long ago, nor those who have taken up the word for one reason or another; such

errors were challenged at the time. It is a matter of the mimetic use of techniques invented by the first surrealists, techniques which are reappearing in all sorts of productions within the movement itself but which on close analysis lack revolutionary objectivity.

Only a complete objective *necessity* can justify the use of a surrealist technique after its discovery, such as a mania or a hysterical state of suggestion. But we believe it is time to react against the tendency to consider certain objectively surrealist techniques as mechanically transmissible and capable of being used indefinitely.

Surrealist *discoveries* exist, but surrealist manners, applicable as they stand, which would merely replace the old and odious methods used by poets, painters or writers, do not.

Although procedures discovered by the surrealists such as automatic writing, collage or delirious interpretation have an objective value which, so strong is our consent to and admiration of them, cannot be overestimated. It is evident that the *idealistic* repetition of their use removes all primary theoretical value from them and is entirely unjustifiable from the surrealist point of view, that is to say in what is inherently most dialectical about this revolutionary movement. For, through this artistic repetition, surrealist techniques, in the hands of those who let themselves be fooled by such a doubtful interpretation of objectivity, become aesthetic and abstract techniques.

Around and even within surrealism, and above all in painting and poetry, one finds certain surrealist principles taken up again, modified and remade, and the existence of the 'landscape' we refer to constitutes in our eyes an *artistic deviation* that is dangerous from any perspective. This, frequently involuntary, 'surrealist' mannerism threatens to turn surrealism into an artistic current, making it acceptable to our class enemies, assigning it an inoffensive historical past that would, in a word, cause it to lose the edge which, through all of the contradictions of the outside world, has driven those who have made revolution their *raison d'être*.

We therefore see in the non-objective and routine use of major surrealist techniques an error leading to the depreciation of these discoveries and allowing artistic tendencies disgracefully to appropriate these revolutionary values, something which constitutes a mortal threat to the development of thought and action.

The transformation of objective surrealist discoveries into artistic techniques can be related to a second error we must identify, which we label the persuasive tendency to propagate a given state of the surrealist movement.

This tendency only serves to amplify the first, given that it introduces surrealism into a sort of cultural politics. 'Surrealist' anthologies visibly express this second deviation, and the endeavour to propagate existing dis-

coveries in a mechanical fashion, so that the resulting ideas radiate out, in a way that can only be said to represent a woeful attempt to make surrealism acceptable by fixing it at a particular moment of its perpetual movement.

In pointing out these two fundamental errors of recent years to our surrealist friends, we believe it is unnecessary to emphasise further the dangers lying in wait for revolutionary thought, which take refuge in a deadly confidence in the ability to fix what was violently torn from the outside world and from ourselves in cultural terms.

The transformation of surrealism into a current of artistic revolt would put an end to its theoretical development, and following its transition through the inevitable stages of refusal and scandal, it would risk sharing the fate of every movement of revolt which the class enemy has always finally managed, in one way or another, to use for its own purposes.

In the following pages we intend to present the theoretical conclusions we have reached, but whose terms we can really only express partially.

At the same time we feel we should clarify certain fundamental viewpoints, which we believe may be attributed to the surrealist movement in general, positions whose role is to highlight the concrete discoveries we wish to present and which are taken up more fully in specialist works devoted to them.

It is difficult to find graphic equivalents to our most inexpressible desires, but we shall attempt to indicate a few essential points. The first concerns the need to maintain surrealism in a continually revolutionary state, a state which might offer us synthetic (Hegelian, materialist, unprecedented) solutions, which moreover have until now been awaited in vain.

This continually revolutionary state can only be maintained and developed by a dialectical position of permanent *negation and of the negation of negation*, a position which might be capable of the greatest imaginable extension towards everything and everyone.

We reject any tendency, no matter how seductive, to make surrealism either the inheritor of revolutionary thought, the most advanced movement of our time, or any other synthetic state which could naturally recur in it. The current position of surrealism incontestably *implies* these synthetic states, but we believe we should reject any attempt to limit it statistically or to allow it to be swallowed up by problems of legacies.

The mad hopes we placed in the apparition of surrealism and in our own apparition demand the expression of all our desires, all at once, and this desire to desire would clash with any attempt to transform surrealism into a movement simply belonging to the present.

The dialectical and materialist power of surrealism towards all the other existing movements could exert precisely the same attraction on its

members and sooner or later we would find ourselves plunged into the stupefied melancholy implied by any spiritual heritage.

In our opinion surrealism cannot be *simply* the most historically advanced movement. Without wishing in the slightest to founder in the philosophical idealism of all romanticism, we feel that surrealism can only exist in continual opposition to the whole world and to itself, in that negation of negation guided by the most inexpressible delirium, and without of course losing one or other aspect of its immediate revolutionary power.

Unveiling the most revolutionary positions, surrealism is equally its own participant, and cannot be lost in itself for any length of time. It is here that the key to all revolutionary power is hidden, which must not elude us, even for the most tempting quantitative results.

We recognise in this dialectical attitude the most concrete possibility of keeping intact within ourselves the revolutionary mechanism and the means to trample underfoot any discovery which does not immediately oblige us to find another. Each state of negation, linked one to another in a concrete, absurd and dialectical way, causes us to reject the past in its entirety, for no historical moment has been able to fulfil the relative–absolute of our desires. We reject humanity's past in its entirety, as well as its mnemonic support in memory, recognising our desires not simply as the projection of fundamental needs (such as some of the desires hidden within the unconscious) but also those we must labour to invent. Any limitation of the possibility of inventing new desires, from no matter what source and for whatever reason, will always awaken in us the demoniac taste for negation and for the negation of negation.

In this effort to reconcile interior reality with exterior reality, we tirelessly return to certain sublime discoveries which exalt our positions. We are thinking above all of the materialist (Leninist) position of the relative–absolute and of objective chance, meaning the meeting of human finality with universal causality.

Objective chance constitutes for us the most awesome means to locate the relative–absolute aspects of reality, in its favourable forms, and it alone ceaselessly offers us the possibility of discovering the *contradictions* of a society divided along class lines.

Objective chance leads us to see in *love* the general revolutionary method appropriate to surrealism.

After so many fruitless attempts to find a concretely revolutionary method that is unsullied by idealistic remnants, we have come to consider erotic magnetism as our most valid insurrectional means of support.

It is clear that in order to have reached this general conclusion our attitude towards love developed in an unprecedented fashion. This attitude implies every state of love known up to the present day, but at the same time it demands the dialectical negation of these states.

Whilst accepting every known state of love – libertinism, fidelity, polygamy and the psychopathology of love – we also go beyond them, at least theoretically. In trying to tap love in its most violent and decisive, most attractive and impossible forms, we are not content to see it as the great disrupter that occasionally, in one place or another, breaks through the divisions of class society. The destructive power of love against all established order both contains and goes beyond the revolutionary needs of our age.

We proclaim that love, freed of its social and individual, psychological and theoretical, religious or sentimental constraints, is our principal means of knowledge and of action. Its methodical aggravation, its limitless development, its overwhelming fascination – the first stages of which we have already passed through with Sade, Engels, Freud and Breton – offer the dreadful changes of direction and the scandalous exertions that bring the most effective means of action within not only our grasp, but also that of all revolutionaries.

This dialecticised and materialised love constitutes the relative–absolute revolutionary method revealed to us by surrealism, and in the discovery of new erotic possibilities that go beyond social, medical or psychological love, we can grasp the first forms of *objective love*. We believe that, even in these most immediate forms, the unlimited eroticisation of the proletariat constitutes the most precious promise to be found to assure the latter, in the wretched age we are living through, a real revolutionary development.

In attempting to discover and invent the most staggering aspects of love, we stand opposed as much to the limitations with which nature confronts us from without as to the limitations of Oedipus complexes within.

We stand opposed to the passivity shown up to the present towards nature, to the secret admiration it has inspired amongst revolutionary movements, since we are impatient with the sluggishness of natural laws.

Neither can we accept a human biology which reflects the most advanced aspects of nature, nor the cellular axioms which surround us and lead fatally to death, contradicting our revolutionary desires and keeping us in a state of ambivalent tension between life and its contradiction.

We dream of reconciling our class situation with our attitude towards the regressive aspects of nature, given the danger that a blind and implicit confidence in the latter's possibilities, as has almost always been current, might harbour a dreadful oppression.

A total revolution, as first formulated by the surrealist movement, cannot accept the Darwinian leaps of nature, the contradictory influences of human biology or the abstract indifference of cosmology.

We wish to dialecticise and make concrete the utopian attempts at human resistance against nature, and we wish to topple the terrifying barriers which

nature ceaselessly erects against us and under whose cover class society can be upheld.

We have long known that any sense of measure, for opportunistic reasons, in our opposition to the outside world will only backfire on us. This is why we want to link our historical revolutionary position to our revolutionary position against nature, thus favourably re-establishing the necessary relationship between desire and the universe, considered from a cosmological point of view.

Now more than ever we realise that any class revolution must be concretely *mirrored* by a revolution against nature.

The necessity to discover the love which, unhindered, might overthrow social and natural obstacles leads us to a *non-Oedipal* position. The existence of birth traumas and Oedipal complexes, revealed by Freudian theory, constitutes the natural and mnemonic limits, the unfavourable unconscious wrinkles, which, unbeknownst to us, control our attitude towards the outside world. We have formulated the problem of the complete release of man (Gherasim Luca, *L'Inventeur de l'amour*), adding as its condition the destruction of our initial Oedipal position.

Thanks to the revolutionary movements the situation of the father has been soundly shaken, as much in its direct as in its symbolic forms. But the castrating vestiges of birth traumas nonetheless still persist within them, supported moreover by the favourable position of brotherhood maintained by political movements; this too is simply one of the forms covered by the initial complexes.

The painful defeats of love, all tainted by romantic idealism and humanity's incapacity to objectivise itself, find their first form in the mnemonic fixity of the mother and in the primitive other we carry within us.

The *qualitative* transformation of love into a general revolutionary method, and the possibility of going beyond the unconscious image of love in one giant leap, are prevented by this primordial theoretical defeat maintained within us by the Oedipal position. Freed of the mortal anguish acquired at birth, freed of the limitations of complexes deriving from our unconscious Oedipal attitude, we are finally trying to find the specific paths of our liberation and to go beyond the 'endless cycle' implied by our erotic attitudes in their biological or psychic forms.

Considered in the light of a non-Oedipal position, the existing states of love are merely stages we must cross, and the concrete absurdity of objective love can only be unleashed by this imperious Hegelian negation, turned aphrodisiac to the point of paroxysm.

The necessities of revolution require the non-Oedipal attitude to be extended on a general level relating to the infra-psychic situation of revo-

lutionaries in their immediate struggle (Gherasim Luca, *Premier manifeste non-Oedipien*).

So long as the proletariat retains within itself the fundamental primary complexes against which we are fighting, its struggle and even its victory will be illusory, since the class enemy will remain hidden, unperceived, in its blood. Oedipal limitations fasten the proletariat to a position that symmetrically negates the bourgeoisie, and so becomes inculcated with its odious fundamental values, in a way that is all the more dangerous for being unacknowledged.

For so long as the proletariat's unconscious maintains the father-brother relation, it is held in a state of slavery towards itself, and so retains the deformations stemming from nature and the capitalist economy. Marx had already drawn attention not only to the need to think of the proletariat as an antagonistic class arisen from the development of the means of production, but also of the need to deny this imposed state. To deny this state, the teeth of revolution must bite deep into mankind's unconscious, natural passivity. This is a matter of going beyond the abstract and artificial admiration for the proletariat, and finding the lines of force able to imply its own negation. This negation must, moreover, relinquish humanitarian and outdated internationalism, which continues to permit national interests to affirm themselves under cloak of reformist egalitarianism, in favour of an extreme anti-national position, concretely class-based and outrageously cosmopolitan, taking up its most violent aspects, to the point of bringing mankind itself into question.

Our position on the relations between the conscious and the unconscious, as revealed by dream and psychoanalysis, is undergoing a dialectical change that emerges from our general attitude towards reality.

The mechanical opposition which has been demonstrated to exist between the conscious and the unconscious, in the latter's favour, no longer appears in the same light once we truly situate ourselves in an antagonistic position. Given that the unconscious continues partially to retain regressive memory traces in an obsessive oneiromancy (Trost, *Vision dans le cristal*), we stand opposed to dreams, when considered as the most revealing unconscious symptoms, when the manifest content of these dreams preserves reactionary diurnal remnants.

It is clearly not at all a question of another secondary elaboration of censorial intent, but solely of attempting to establish a real relationship between waking and nocturnal life. This seems to us to be impossible whilst we continue to accept each dream in its entirety, even in its regressive mnemonic aspects.

The acceptance of any dream, even one with reactionary content, simply because it is a dream and a symptom of the unconscious, and in conse-

quence the acceptance of certain oneiric scenes (such as those of repetition or social castration) which flatly contradict our conscious ideological positions, would lead us to impose taboos that only a mechanistic position can attempt to nurture.

In acknowledging, in an indescribably concrete way, the identity of the real functioning of thought throughout waking life, madness and dreams, and in seeing in these three modes only the artificial distinctions maintained by the unfolding of thought in dissimilar external conditions, we are trying to reject the degrading influence of oppressive social facades, not by mechanically re-establishing waking life in dream and madness, but also by a critical attitude towards contradictory diurnal remnants, preserved in the memory in the latter states. We can not accept regressive dreams, as we can not accept religious insanity, because our confidence in these great revolutionary instruments prevents us from harbouring, free from challenge, reactionary contents whose mechanical diversions would only take us further away from the bringing together of waking and nocturnal life.

By researching at the same time the functioning of dream within waking life, with all of its explosive consequences, we can approach the total disorder of waking and nocturnal existence, through the negation of their artificial separation, a negation whose first stages have so far only been offered to us by somnambulism, automatism and a few other exceptional states.

We have returned to the problem of knowledge through images (Trost, *Le Profil navigable*) by establishing a clear distinction between images produced by artistic means and images resulting from rigorously applied scientific procedures, such as the operation of chance or of automatism. We stand opposed to the tendency to reproduce, through symbols, certain valid theoretical contents by the use of pictorial techniques, and believe that the unknown that surrounds us can find a staggering materialisation of the highest order in indecipherable images. In generally accepting until now pictorial reproductive means, surrealist painting will find that the way to its blossoming lies in the absurd use of aplastic, objective and entirely non-artistic procedures.

[...] Without yet having the necessary means to enable their presentation in all their theoretical scope, we hereby confirm our desire to rediscover the scientific (cosmological) correspondences of our attitude, and our realisation that the surrealist position is in agreement with many discoveries which appear distant from its concerns. Subjectively—objectively, we agree with the discoveries which hold a fascinating attraction over us, such as non-Euclidean geometry, the fourth dimension, Brownian motion, quantum physics and space–time, just as we are partially in agreement with non-Pasteurian biology as represented by the Heraclitian position of homeopathy.

We hope to see, in a concretely active way, these scientific researches coming together, though their too specific nature undoubtedly prevents them from being completely correct, and we are trying to find the delirious methods required to effect a similar coming together in the crushing and malignant materialism of black magic. In *La Loi de gravitation* we have attempted, despairingly, to give an objective character to the desire to encounter the image of the universe by breaking through the unfavourable enclosure of nature.

Still separated from one another though they are, we dream of the secret harmony that must exist between dream and the fourth dimension, between luxury and Brownian motion, between the hypnotic look of love and space–time. In agreement with science in its attractive and crypthaesthetic aspects, surrealism overthrows at the same time science’s mathematical rigidity with a confidence reminiscent of sleepwalkers’ journeys into the heart of their own mystery, at one for an instant with the secret destiny of humanity.

Crossed night and day by an infinite series of ever more provocative, ever more precious and devouring negations, the unequalled instrument of conquest that is dialectical materialism insanely exalts our insatiable hunger for reality, ferociously gnawing at the black and captive flesh of man.

Covered in blood, his palpitating bones now seem to be long hanging crystals.

Gherasim Luca and Trost.
Bucharest, 1945

This document reinstituted the French Surrealist Group after the upheavals of the war. Bringing together pre-war surrealists with new adherents, it is notable for the absence of most of those who had remained active during the war years (many of whom sought an accommodation with the PCF and were to form a short-lived ‘Revolutionary Surrealist Group’ in opposition to Breton’s group). In France, an atmosphere permeated with disquiet in which post-liberation euphoria had given way to a meanness of spirit (continuing basic shortages, a climate of revenge against former collaborators, and a distrust of those who had not been active in the Resistance) was fanned by the hardening international situation auguring the Cold War. With communists hailed for their role in the defeat of Nazism, Stalinists were able to cement their control of the PCF, which had enormous prestige in every sphere of the political and intellectual life of France. In maintaining their view that Stalinism was counter-revolutionary, the surrealists were thus effectively marginalising themselves.

INAUGURAL RUPTURE

Declaration approved on 21 June 1947 by the group in France in order to define its position against any partisan policy.

Surrealism has generally defined its political position in relation to that of the Communist Party, which has persistently reserved its most poisonous insults for those who, defining themselves in relation to it rather than to any formation of the bourgeoisie, have not been afraid at the same time to be seen as recklessly recognising, affirming and underlining its historic importance. Revolutionary elements opposed to the Communist Party share the common and constant fate of being rejected by it and placed in the reviled category of public offenders. We would be content to resign ourselves to the fact were it not important to us not to be classed by honest but poorly informed people, and without a greater examination of all sorts of slanders, in the ranks of the counter-revolution. Equally, when local Stalinists confront us with the incompatibility of their political dependency and a surrealist activity, we can do no more than explain our resolutely negative response by reminding those with short memories that for our part we have continuously declared our unshakeable attachment to the revolutionary tradition of the workers' movement, a tradition which the Communist Party further forsakes with each passing day. We have no illusions about how the reaffirmation of such a protest today will be welcomed by the salaried bureaucrats. Yet we renew it vigorously while indicating to professional politicians (to whom it could not be addressed) that we consider it definitively irreducible to tactical exigencies and this, we hope, will result in our being discredited in the eyes of these epigones. If we invoke a tradition, it is not one which falsifies human development and pretends to deceive the enemy (is not stealing their weapons to become dialectically their tributary?) and haggles about the best way to direct the anger at whose heart we do not hesitate to derive those values (both of morality and action) most necessary for our deliverance. We repeat that the Communist Party, in adopting (for the poorly conceived needs of a struggle it is no longer qualified to see through to its conclusion) the methods and weapons of the bourgeoisie, commits a fatal and irredeemable error, an error which not only daily further compromises the partial conquests made by the working class and indefinitely defers the hour of its decisive victory, but exposes the flagrant complicity of the Communist Party with those it was yesterday calling its class enemies. The more recent development of communist policy is a logical and direct consequence of the Moscow trials and the sabotage (in Spain) of the civil war that served the interests first of the bourgeoisie and then of fascism. This policy is all the more unacceptable and odious as regards the fate of Germany, an object of the fanatical

and narrow-minded fury not only of French diplomacy but, for the same reasons, of the French Communist Party. It is clear that to maintain the current situation of the German people can only result in the growth of a veritable cancer in the heart of Europe from which the most sinister forces could easily draw morbid strength. The German people did not produce Hitler, because no people can produce a tyrant for themselves. Instead, we intend to pay the most explicit homage to the German people, that of Hegel, of Marx and Stirner, of Arnim and Novalis, of Nietzsche and Freud, of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. It is inconceivable that the German people – without danger for all peoples and without shame for them – could be quarantined and cut off from the world community. At a time when the French Communist Party, with the agreement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, adopts a different position on the German question to that of the Soviet state, when the absence of a powerful workers' International becomes most cruelly felt, when morality and action are proportionately dissociated in workers' actions in different countries due to the nationalist undertakings of the French Communist Party, it seems appropriate to recall that in 1864 the Provisional Committee of the International Association of Workers required Marx to devote a paragraph prefacing its Statutes to the declaration 'that all societies and individuals who join recognise [...] *Truth, Justice and Morality* as the basis of their conduct towards all peoples'. Before finishing with this recourse to tradition, we declare that we are separated from the Communist Party by all the distance that separates the morality towards whose construction we work for in a revolutionary way from a reactionary and outmoded art.

The political experience of surrealism, which for a decade led it to evolve around the Communist Party, is perfectly conclusive. To follow the Communist Party today in its present class collaboration contradicts the motivations which once impelled surrealism to undertake political action (which are as much immediate demands of the spirit, and most especially in the ethical domain, as the pursuit of the distant aim of the total liberation of humanity). When this party suggests, to whoever will listen, that its participation in the bourgeois state is simply the ultimate consequence of a policy of ploys and stratagems, it can only heighten the damage caused by its betrayal. Like any revolutionary, we cannot for a moment take account of the effectiveness of a policy founded on the most glaring abuse of bourgeois principles, a policy that ignores vital ethical reforms and, taking account only of provisional ends which are, for that very reason, suspect, loses sight of the final liberation of humanity. We are perfectly well aware of the sarcasm of those who, because we are appalled by tactical precepts elevated to the rank of categorical imperatives, accuse us of trying to re-establish the compromised solidity of a morality traditionally presented in an eternal light in order to render it less questionable. To this we reply that

the end they pursue, that is, the economic liberation of the workers, cannot be the ultimate end to which we aspire. We have no hesitation in proclaiming once more, as we have on many occasions, that such a liberation by Proletarian Revolution is desirable no matter what, even though every precaution must be taken against the Dictatorship of the Proletariat degenerating into the dictatorship of a party. We denounce all those who try to defy the ineluctable retribution of the revolution as criminals. But, as we see it, the Proletarian Revolution is only a means, that is, an imminent end organically determined by a later end. If there are all sorts of means more imminent still that seem able to further its coming, we do not consider them justified for all that. The ultimate outcome of historical evolution, marking the end of the misfortunes of the spirit that is at last triumphant over its past, alone justifies people's actions. Only those actions that do not compromise the evolution of the moral law could be justified and it is precisely because we do not believe in its fixity (this would be as absurd as the fixity of history) that we do not accept being constrained, under the pretext of preparing for the Proletarian Revolution, to regressive practices of which political collaboration with the class enemy is only the general aspect. In other words, we will always find it acceptable to transgress the current moral law, but only in order to progress it.

The Proletarian Revolution will sound the death knell of capitalism, a regime of economic exploitation of man by man which corresponds to political oppression by the bourgeoisie. This, brief as it is, is all that can be said about this revolution. The present state of the science of historical development does not enable us to predict when Christianity will be replaced and what the new doctrine will be. Marxism, in so far as it is a method of understanding this development, seems to wish to ensure the perpetual renewal of knowledge by action and of action by knowledge, that is, to rule out the formation of any new mythical doctrine. The question arises of knowing the extent to which it will take the place of such a doctrine. As we see it, the danger is that if what succeeds Christianity, when it vanishes as a religion, is not undertaken, then the economic-political revolution of the proletariat can not, *ipso facto*, bring about the collapse of Christian civilisation, which preceded capitalism and only asks to survive it. The history of institutions, and especially that of morals, shows quite well the enormous resistance Christianity – the frame and essence of Western civilisation which today stretches over almost the whole world – can maintain against the appeals of economy. Capitalism had to install itself into this civilisation by adapting its own laws to the conditions it imposed on it. All capitalist attempts (especially the most recent, that of the fascist experience) to break this unspoken contract by violence have foundered, and so the bourgeoisie finds itself enclosed in an ideological framework that predates it. This old Christian framework has been able to change its

shape several times in the course of history in order to survive the successive disappearance of different oppressive classes. It has never yet been broken. Equally, the wondrous vitality of this civilisation, whose most ancient, most important and most vigorous laws are as old as Aristotle or Moses must, in any case, alert us against sitting back and counting on its decline through the Proletarian Revolution alone. Going beyond the stage of this revolution, we will not have taken one step along the ethical path and, to speak more generally, will not have ventured into the exalting adventures of knowledge, of the transformation of the world and of changing life, unless we have subjugated age old survivals. The subjugation of the Thomist order will not, whatever Marxists think, be automatic. History still shows that, if the transformation of political institutions follows the changes which occur in the economic domain with a noticeable delay, morality, for its part, resists underlying influences and can be transformed only extremely slowly and according to a process whose developmental formula is not composed only, or perhaps even predominantly, of economic ends. The moral doctrine of Christianity, sanctioned in all civilised lands by a common and constant profane right, expresses itself in the Ten Commandments which remain the essence of the revelation of Moses. Marxists need to recognise that since Moses was called to the top of Mount Sinai no important economic change has occurred. Aristotle's logic – to leave the sphere of morality – is no longer that of Heraclitus, but it is still that of Kant. Do Marxists conclude from this that more important economic changes took place between Heraclitus and Aristotle than between Aristotle and Kant? Let's return to morality, the most constant object of our preoccupations: it would be absurd to count on the political revolution alone to change them. We have even less confidence in this since we see Marx's followers as directly responsible for the outmoded morality of our time and the persistent dominance of the Christian doctrine over morality. These theoreticians have never denounced the current morality except when they saw an immediate political advantage in it. Sade and Freud, on the other hand, opened the breach. Whatever the doctrine that must succeed Christianity, we see Sade and Freud as the assigned precursors of its ethic.

Moral meaning is incontestably the human reality that the Communist Party tramples underfoot every day. For some years, we could have believed that this trampling which, in certain circumstances (since the Moscow trials, for example), has assumed the appearance of a wanton stomping, was specific to the Stalinist attitude. The trust we have placed in Trotskyist thought during this time is especially explained by this consideration. We continue to be particularly interested in this politics. Definitively convinced that the internal revolution is as important for individuals as national liberation for the populace (that national liberation which we continue to demand for colonial people, but which we do not hesitate to

denounce as having favoured the worst equivocations when it comes to the recent history of France) convinced, we say in 1947, that the international action of a resolutely international party is the most imperious requirement of contemporary history, we have, on the political level, no other ambition than that of placing confidence in such a party and such an International. But the moral necessities we uphold, comparatively respected as they have been until now by proletarian movements opposed to Stalinism, are not invulnerable to error in this arena either. Surrealism and these different movements, which extend to and include anarchism (the moral scruples of surrealism would probably find more sympathy in anarchism than elsewhere) still come together in the realms both of protest against the present and of intransigent and lucid demands for the future. But the part Trotskyism and anarchism take in future events – and the way this part will be played – mainly depends upon the solidity of our alliance with them. The personal attitude of Leon Trotsky – astonishingly inspired and most often irreducible in his own views about the moral problem – and his marvellous contribution to *incessant human sedition* have done so much to bring this alliance together and reinforce the pact. It would nevertheless be risky for surrealism to adopt any other position in relation to these movements than that of a suspension of judgement. This suspension extends to the very rule of political action framed by the parties. Of course we will only ever make a lasting union with the political action of a party that to the extent that this action will not become trapped in the dilemma we find on too many street corners today, that of *ineffectiveness* or of *compromise*. Surrealism, whose specific destiny is to have to claim innumerable reforms in the realm of the spirit, especially ethical reforms, will refuse to participate in any political action which would need to be immoral in order to appear effective. It will also refuse – in order not to be forced to renounce mankind's liberation as its final aim – political action which would tolerate ineffectiveness rather than question outmoded principles.

After 25 years of uninterrupted irradiation, surrealism does not flatter itself that it has done more than establish a preliminary stage, or effected more than *the need for a new collective sensibility*. Its confidence in the perfectibility of mankind's fate is, today as in the past, the corrective it uses to make bearable the distressing spectacle of the world. It holds that this perfectibility, although it may depend on economic factors, is tied up even more intimately with the resolution of conflicts obstructing the road to complete liberty, like those between dream and action, the marvellous and the contingent, the imaginary and the real, the expressible and the inexpressible, candour and irony, the fortuitous and the determined, reflection and impulse, reason and passion, all particular cases of a larger antinomy that, to the greatest misery of mankind, opposes desire to necessity. It is because it has not despaired of the resolution of these conflicts that

surrealism soon disappointed those who expected it to provide only pretexts to elude the problems it has doubtless not resolved but whose bases it has mapped out and which it more rigorously questions with each passing day.

Surrealism, about which so many both on the right and left effect to speak only in the past tense, is undoubtedly less certain of its own path than its detractors are of theirs. We are careful to say on *both right and left* for if it must be admitted that the multiple and recent attacks launched against surrealism had formed part of a concerted plan, things could hardly have been any different. Had surrealism consented to disavow itself to the point of blindly orbiting around the world of the Communist Party, in so doing repudiating everything that constituted its *raison d'être*, it would then have found favour with Mr Sartre, having acted in his eyes as a viable movement. Which just goes to show that it is just as embarrassing to be alone in betraying something as it is to be alone in not doing so. Suffice it to unburden Mr Sartre of this brilliant statement, gift wrapped as it is: surrealism's opposition to the Communist Party will be exposed, Mr Sartre tells us 'when Soviet Russia and, consequently, the French Communist Party enter a constructive organisation phase'. We are aware of Mr Thorez's¹ recently formulated 'constructive opposition'. Here we are bestowed with an even more attractive terminology. Yet as far as we understand it, this 'constructive organisational phase' took place around 1934–35 and corresponded with the start of the collaboration of the Communist Party with the same bourgeois class for whose consolidation Mr Sartre reproaches us for working. Earlier, Mr Sartre had been careful to disclose to us that, according to him, 'literature is in essence the subjectivity of a society in permanent revolution'. We would like to know how much permanent revolution there still is in Soviet society. But all his contradictions do not allow Mr Sartre to establish a dialectic, and if Parisian existentialism linked up tomorrow in alliance with the Communist Party it would effectively show – beyond *Pravda's* bad humour – that two abnormal ideologies do not constitute a legitimate idea.

While its adversaries of right and left are bound, seemingly spellbound, to fairly lamentable tactical considerations or are hoist on their own petard in short-term calculations, surrealism surges forward, *at once protected and exposed* by the passion animating it and which remains its first and foremost constant. This passion about whose character there can be no ambiguity – in fact a subversive rather than sacrificial passion, directed towards the unbinding of mankind and not for its hypocritical and degrading 'redemption' – has never for a moment been brought into question by its trials and, with no need for lengthy statements, guarantees the part that surrealism will play in the permanent revolution (from which it is inseparable) of people and things.

In demanding that the revolution encompasses mankind as a whole, not to conceive its liberation in a particular aspect but rather in all its aspects at once, surrealism declares itself uniquely qualified to throw into the balance the forces of which it has made itself first the prospector, then the *marvellously magnetic conductor* – from the child-woman to black humour, from objective chance to the will to myth. The elective arena of these forces is unconditional, irresistible mad love, which alone allows people to take on the full measure of life, able to evolve according to new psychological dimensions.

Once prospected, once able to join and mutually exalt one another, these forces may perhaps finally reconcile human finality and universal causality. They are written in the margins, they participate in the progress of the most advanced disciplines of our time thanks to which we have non-Euclidian geometry, non-Maxwellian physics, non-Pasteurian biology, non-Newtonian mechanics, disciplines in their turn united with a non-Aristotelian logic and of that non-Moses morality, the elaboration of which we decisively call for to foil the unlivable.

We do not believe that the tumultuous reaction of Rimbaud to life and Marx's watchword with regard to the world are things of the past, but resound in the depths of man. But ever since the reasonable and rational process of consciousness gained ascendancy over the passionate process of the unconscious, that is since the last myths congealed into deliberate mystification, the secret of knowledge and action – of acting without alienating the acquisition of knowledge – seems to have been lost. The time has come to put forward a new myth able to carry mankind onwards into the next stage of its ultimate destination.

This is the enterprise surrealism has specifically set itself. It is its great rendezvous with history.

Dream and revolution were not meant to exclude one another but to harmonise together. To dream the revolution is not to renounce it but to make it in a double sense and without mental reservations.

To thwart the inevitable is not to flee life, but to throw oneself totally and irrevocably into it.

SURREALISM IS WHAT WILL BE.

Adolphe Acker, Sarane Alexandrian, Maurice Baskine, Hans Bellmer, Joë Bousquet, Francis Bouvet, Victor Brauner, André Breton, Serge Bricianer, Roger Brielle, Jean Brun, Gaston Criel, Antonio Dacosta, Pierre Cuvillier, Frédérique Delanglade, Pierre Demarne, Matta Echaurren, Marcelle Ferry, Jean Ferry, Guy Gullequin, Henry Goetz, Arthur Harfaux, Heisler, Georges Hénein, Maurice Henry, Jacques Hérold, Marcel Jean, Nadine Kraïnik, Jerzy Kujawski, Robert Lebel, Pierre Mabilie, Jehan Mayoux, Francis Meunier, Robert Michelet, Nora Mitrani, Henri Parisot, Henri Pastoureaux,

Guy Péchenard, Candido Costa Pinto, Gaston Puel, René Renne, Jean-Paul Riopelle, Stanislas Rodanski, N. and H. Seigle, Claude Tarnaud, Toyen, Isabelle Waldberg, Patrick Waldberg, Ramsès Younane.
Paris, 21 June 1947

This tract restates surrealist principles following the resolution of the 'Pastoureaux Affair', a complex and often bitter debate which had exposed a division in the group between the perceived dogmatism and nostalgia of an older pre-war membership, and those younger recruits determined to see surrealism progress from the obligations of its historical past. The loss of most of Henri Pastoureaux's supporters in the wake of the crisis effectively left a group of predominantly new adherents around Breton and Péret, and the text effectively identified those surrealists who would be its principal activists over the following two decades.

HIGH FREQUENCY

To the usual ends, a section of the press has tried to exploit recent incidents arising in the heart of surrealism, with the result that we must clarify a minimum of corrections and details.

Neither a school nor a sect, much more than an attitude, surrealism is, in the most aggressive and complete sense of the word, an adventure. An adventure of humanity and the real thrown together in the same movement. With all due respect to the spiritualists among the comfortably seated critics, dimming their lights so as to conjure up its shadow, surrealism continues to define itself in relation to the life whose forces it has never ceased to exalt while attacking their secular alienation.

It does not have to resemble what it once was to the letter, less still the caricature its adversaries propose of it. Bartering with a version of its historical past ritually expurgated through their attentions, it is in vain that they would try to define its limits as the very narrow ones of their own understanding.

Many today reassure themselves by believing they can observe the usury of certain forms of 'scandal' set in play by surrealism, without noticing that they could be only temporary forms of resistance and struggle against the scandal constituted by the spectacle of the world and deriving from its institutions. This scandal is today at its height and justifies on our part a protest that is just as active although necessarily different from our earlier ones. Who would be convinced that the degeneracy of traditional political formations would be enough to render our passion for freedom platonic? Recent events in Spain prove once more that the absence of partisan watchwords does not prevent the revolutionary genius from shaking all servitude, starting with the provisional subjection of human claims to a regressive ideology, reigning despotically over the masses.

Faced with this plague, we contend more than ever that the different manifestations of revolt must not be isolated from one another, nor submitted to an arbitrary hierarchy, but that they constitute the facets of a single prism. Because today it allows these diversely coloured, but equally intense, fires to recognise in it their common hearth, and even more judiciously than in the past, surrealism has devoted itself to the resolution of the principal conflicts separating humanity from freedom, in other words from the harmonious development of humanity in its totality and in its innumerable manifestations – a humanity that has finally reached a less precarious meaning for its destiny, cured of any idea of transcendence, liberated from all exploitation.

For us, it goes without saying that Judeo-Christian religion remains, in its literal sense, the 'sworn' enemy of mankind, whether or not it succeeds in incorporating itself into totalitarian ideologies. With its 'work-family-fatherland' accomplices, it must nonetheless close its factory of cripples and corpses. To have done with it, we call systematically for the forces that it has tried to extinguish in the human spirit.

It is with these forces that, in its eternal availability, a youth avid for everything that fights against a daily blinder utilitarianism is allied. It is they who combine together and exalt each other in love, announcing a golden age in which the gold would have no age, where the flower of age, to live, would do without gold. It is they too who make poetry the principle and source of all knowledge, in permanent opposition to stupidity, and its journalistic, radiophonic and cinematographic manifestations (whether metaphysical, political or otherwise).

The will of surrealism to render to mankind the powers of which it has been deprived had not failed to lead it to question every aspect of intuitive knowledge, in particular those embracing esoteric doctrines, whose interest is to unveil certain uninterrupted circuits in space and time. It rejects all the more anything that might marry up certain 'occult' systems to an ensemble of recipes for subservience, and reaffirms in this respect its irreducible hostility to all fideism.

Going far beyond the simple hypothesis of research, surrealism – whose organic existence has become so supple that all our foreign comrades could be associated with the spirit of the present declaration – offers the new prospect of a sufficiently vast and magnetic terrain so that both desire and freedom are recreated there as far as the eye can see.

Jean-Louis Bédouin, Robert Benayoun, André Breton, R. Brudieux, Jean Brun, J.B. Brunius, Adrien Dax, Guy Doumayrou, Jacqueline Duprey, Jean-Pierre Duprey, Jean Ferry, Georges Goldfayn, Jindřich Heisler, Adonis Kyrrou, Alain Lebreton, Gérard Legrand, André Liberati, André Pieyre de Mandiargues, Jehan Mayoux, Nora Mitrani, Octavio Paz, Henri Parisot,

Benjamin Péret, Maurice Raphaël, Man Ray, Claude Rochin, Bernard Roger, Anne Seghers, Jean Schuster, Toyen, Clovis Trouille, François Valorbe, Michel Zimbacca.

Paris, 24 May 1951

This introduction to a new surrealist journal, Le Surréalisme, même, signalled at the same time the French group's continued difficulty in maintaining the public profile it had enjoyed before the war (after Néon and two distinct series of Médium, it was to be the group's fourth new magazine in less than a decade) and the tenacity and fertility of ideas with which it surmounted this challenge. Launched in 1956, Le Surréalisme, même ran for five issues, and was the movement's most ambitious and carefully presented journal since Minotaure ceased publication in 1939.

NOTE FOR *LE SURRÉALISME, MÊME*

A new surrealist journal! Why?

- To affirm the continuity of a type of thought and feeling which has proved quite irreducible to any other;
- To respond to the confidence and the often urgent questions affecting that part of youth which refuses to put its head into the noose;
- To mortify and confound once again those who – for thirty years – have been intoxicated with proclaiming the death of surrealism;
- To forestall that current confusion brought about, for unprepared minds, by the increasing profusion of ventures whose aim is artificially to try to reproduce the climate of surrealism with the intention of promoting, both towards and against it, strangeness for the sake of strangeness, humour for humour's sake, or any other solution just as aberrant as that of art for art's sake;
- To guarantee the strict autonomy of surrealist testimony, faithful and in accordance with itself, but necessarily assuming the new perspectives that the evolution of ideas and morals imposes – in other words scrupulously to pay heed to the constant and the variable;
- To pursue (in a direction that a third of a century of obstruction and ruses has been unable to emulate) the quest for an ever greater liberation of the mind.

April 1956

The retrospective exhibition Surréalisme, sources-histoire-affinités organised at the Galerie Charpentier by former surrealist Patrick Waldberg led to this group protest, issued on the night of its private viewing. In contrast to exhibitions initiated by the Parisian group itself, Waldberg curated a show stressing historical achievements over contemporary activity, signalling the art world's growing insistence on perceiving

surrealism as an historic (and thus marketable) phenomenon; this response stands as a classic statement against all conventional art exhibitions.

CONFRONTING THE LIQUIDATORS

In intellectual undertakings, as in social structures, all revolutionary movement seems consigned these days to seeing itself accompanied by its caricature. Through such displays, fated to discredit the model and sow confusion about its aims, endangered conformism can defend itself more effectively than if it planned a direct confrontation.

Surrealism is not spared this flaw. As mindful as we are about thwarting its effect, it is still gratifying to observe how it reveals in its way the confusion into which our activity's lasting quality plunges our opponents. All that Paris boasts in the way of convenient renegades and false witnesses regularly renew the caricature of surrealism. We intend to illuminate its most recent version ourselves. We'll start by recalling a few elementary truths.

For example, the *quality* of being surrealist is still ultimately sanctioned, not merely by some or other poetic or artistic 'talent', but by reference to a precise collective activity, which alone can lay claim to all of the implications which define surrealism. 'Group' activity is essential, not only for the life of surrealism, but for its specificity: contrary to what has often been said and thought, surrealism has never ceased to determine its line of conduct *collectively*.

Surrealist *painting* also participates in this collective activity even if, by force of acquired habits, the creation of paintings and objects results most often from individual initiatives. It is with a view to extending plastic solutions to the limit, and through the non-professional character of the processes used, that surrealism has systematically encouraged every means of escaping aesthetic constraints, both those of supposedly indispensable 'gifts', and the 'skills' that are still the mark of a stay in one of those institutions ironically called 'art schools'.

Surrealism, much more so than Dada (which during the period of its historical disintegration turned into an occupational joke), has wrought and continues to wreak devastation in the 'old game' of art. The spread of *collage*, the recourse to *frottage*, *decalcomania*, *fumage*, and *imprints* of all sorts, the practice of *automatic drawing* and '*cadavres exquis*', owe their deepest significance to the ambition of reaching the point where – just like poetry – painting 'must be made by all, not be one', without prejudice of the outrageously 'populist' interpretations to which this renowned and obscure phrase, here taken as a simple reference, continues to give free rein. Where Dada undertook to ridicule all creative activity – whether with dissimulation or a wink – surrealism, imbued with the liberating power of the poetic and artistic *act*, in contrast intends to tear down the walls and conventions

of specialisation. This attempt had borne such fruit that it is now admitted (and even more commonly outside surrealism) that one can take on the role of an artist without knowing how to use the specific instruments of painters or sculptors. Hot on the trail of surrealism, almost all of contemporary art has renounced its old preoccupations in order to pursue a poetic investigation – more or less well handled, it goes without saying – of the everyday marvellous.

Thus the current celebration of the *found object* leads, as is the way when it comes to upping the stakes, to some very strange aberrations. If it still bears the ‘inventor’s’ signature – as one is the ‘inventor’ of a cave or a deposit of precious metals discovered by chance during a walk – it has led reciprocally to raising the ‘natural’ object – driftwood, shaped pebbles, mysterious stones, etc. – to the level of the work of art.

Paradoxically, one might wonder if the existence of painters who are considered to be surrealists – especially when it comes to famous painters – is not currently the principal obstacle to the diffusion of surrealist thought in the artistic realm. Because, for the majority of painters ‘listed’ as surrealists, the following phenomenon has occurred: starting from ideas and processes of a collective nature – which in some cases they had instigated – they have ‘recuperated’ the traditional prerogatives attached to the person of the artist and his ‘profession’ instead of continuing to refuse them by their actions and general behaviour. After having accepted, indeed violently defended, the *idea* of a fresh status for artistic and poetic creation which was not the reflection of social stratification but resulted from ‘internal powers’, they have become artists *just like the others*.

If there was no more glory and advantage in being a painter than in being a gardener, the problem would have been resolved long ago. But what painter today would renounce his reputation as a painter, with the cultural and economic prestige that goes with this activity? One understands better then the obstinacy with which the surrealists refuse to detach their creative life from their attitude towards the social machine, that Moloch of energies. This is where, in the last analysis, ‘all evil’ comes from – more exactly from those who submit to this machine, whether it displays its ‘capitalist’ face or assumes the mask of ‘socialism, and who have, in either case, denied everything, or almost everything.

In this respect, the same thing goes for Max Ernst, since his exclusion in 1954 – for compromising with the Phynances Pump of the Venice Biennale – as for Aragon since 1932: both have become by force of events the worst enemies of living surrealism. This behaviour alone would be enough to assure anyone who might doubt the validity of the decisions taken about them. It even happens that, comfortably established in their respective spheres, they take it upon themselves to present themselves as

models of 'fidelity' to ideas they embraced in their youth. Beyond the psychological explanation of a 'bad conscience', relieved only by an addition of cynicism, we see here only the deliberate will to undermine these very ideas thanks to their example and influence. The question that remains is to know who *advances*?

This is reflected in the programme announced with a great fanfare by a press whose claim to inform has long since overwhelmed any mission to explain and communicate. On the basis of his little book devoted to surrealism, just elegantly perfidious enough to please, a large Parisian gallery turns to Patrick Waldberg to organise a surrealist exhibition! We do not contest Waldberg's 'know-how', only his *qualification*. Except for a vapid and entirely episodic participation in surrealist activities between 1944 and 1951, which he concluded for reasons that the insignificance of his previous role spares us from explaining, and subsequent publication of more or less thorough studies of a few well-known surrealist painters, it is not easy to see what could sanction the confidence placed in him or the responsibility with which he is invested. There are many others in Paris, who are not or are no longer surrealists, who could also claim such 'credentials', often with better reason.

Ten years after the 'consecration' of Max Ernst in Venice – a consecration which, given the conditions in which it took place, could only be seen as a *renunciation* of what his surrealist friends considered was infinitely more important than his eminent 'pictorial' position, his revolutionary *moral* attitude – the Galerie Charpentier project, if less garish, is no less of the *same order*. This time it is surrealism as a whole they seek to 'short-circuit' under the pretty spiteful pretext of 'celebrating' its fortieth anniversary. Far from wishing to tar all those who turn up there as individuals with the same brush, we establish no hasty confusion between the proclaimed or secret machinists of this exhibition and those they have convinced to support this stratagem. Let's simply be objective: what would have been thought if, long after the 9th Thermidor, a Fouché or Tallien had organised a ceremony in honour of the French Revolution? A 'surrealist' retrospective organised by Mr Waldberg is hardly different. But in their haste to *finish with it*, our opponents have skipped a stage: the Thermidor of surrealism has not taken place. Beside works of great interest, taking their place at the Galerie Charpentier are tedious pastiches and marginal variations of a sophisticated character. Only snobs will be fooled by the amalgam. But *surrealism will not be there*.

Philippe Audoin, Jean-Louis Bédouin, Robert Benayoun, Jean Benoît, Raymond Borde, Vincent Bounoure, André Breton, Guy Cabanel, Jorge Camacho, Agustín Cárdenas, Adrien Dax, Hervé Delabarre, Radovan Ivsic,

Alain Joubert, Gabriel Der Kervorkian, Robert Lagarde, Gérard Legrand, Joyce Mansour, Jehan Mayoux, Mimi Parent, José Pierre, Jean Schuster, Jean-Claude Silbermann, Jean Terrosian, Toyen.

13 April 1964

The theme of the 1965 11th International Surrealist Exhibition L'Écart absolu (Absolute Divergence) at the Galerie de l'Œil explicitly confronted consumption and technology in the modern world, and especially the loathsome idea that we live in a particularly 'passionate' and luminous age underwritten by the shameful belief in 'progress'. This statement introduces the exhibition's themes.

LET'S GET TO THE POINT

The current International Exhibition of Surrealism is clearly distinguished from previous ones: although, until the present, their theoretical content was revealed *as a backdrop* to what we wanted above all to be an act of *collective lyricism*, this is the first time we have transformed an art gallery into a place displaying a largely presupposed *ideological* whole.

Admittedly, by its very title, *Absolute Divergence*, it excludes the anti-surrealist idea of a detailed *programme* which might at once generate a poetic emptiness and an artistic poverty. However, whether they directly bore witness to our activity at a given moment (1938, 1947), or involved a particularly subversive 'theme' as a pretext (1959), earlier exhibitions have *only obliquely* revealed – through their arrangement and the texts accompanying them – the renewed reflection we were casting over the 'times'.

Moreover, we have deliberately opted for a 'combative' exhibition, which *directly* confronts the most intolerable aspects of the society in which we live. Less than ever, as will be seen, can we accept the 'aesthetic' alibis which in the past year have been the only things holding together a rag-bag with historical pretensions spread across one of the most official exhibition halls of Paris by some of our aspiring gravediggers.²

As is imperative for us, the necessity of showing the latest developments of the *irreducible* findings of surrealism corresponds very precisely to the major danger presently facing the free exercise of thought.

Having been unable to reduce us by *assimilation* to a religious sect, a political party or to a literary group (nor in the course of the years to have broken our unity or our sense of renewal) those individuals who are so disturbed by us can no longer hope to do more than smother surrealism in a *confusion* from which they can take profit and glory. By an altogether routine misinterpretation, responsibility for this general confusion, or rather this dissolution of the forces of the sensibility and the intellect in a magma of calendars from which nothing eternal emerges, is attributed to surrealism.

Let us once more, in passing, dot the i's: contrary to Dada, surrealism never intended to cultivate 'negation for negation's sake'. The interest it continues to take in certain great works of a nihilist tinge (those of Rabbe for example, or, in a rather different way, of Darien)³ does not imply any unmitigated embrace of the paroxysm inspiring them, causing us to look in their direction without giving way to their fascination.

Without doubt the price paid by any influential revolutionary value is that part of its energy gets lost and is even *diverted*: if this serves realms fundamentally alien to surrealism or ends it considers radically harmful, the persistence of such diversion testifies in its way to our vitality. Still, its technique has 'progressed': its by-products no longer just plagiarise and deform the original, they claim all its vital space, presenting their insipid verbiage as its completion. Thus we see on TV a gang of stale self-seekers calling themselves the 'Poets' Club' and giving themselves a sinecure of the vulgar denigration of all they plunder by bringing it down to their own 'level' – a level nevertheless first of all that of their public.

Debilitating conjecture always uses 'fashion' as its pretext – reduced to the very latest jumble following the most insipid Parisian customs – but also the adoration of anything and everything that appears, if you will, *fresh out of the oven*.

We are unable to prevent people from invoking 'surrealism' pell-mell, such as certain artists who cultivate an oneirism of waiting rooms, or certain 'thinkers' (among whom we are appalled to find Edgar Morin) who, faced with the almost total lethargy of revolutionary activity, have found refuge in a 'prospective' where the most disparate ideas are paired up, to a scandalous extent, under cover of a 'planetary' relativism. At least, this monstrous *vagueness* which characterises today's mental landscape leaves us free to stress its sharp *contrast* with the most categorical aspects of our ambition.

Even those who only shrug their shoulders in the presence of the great poets and philosophers of the nineteenth century, and who shout themselves hoarse in declaring that they have been surpassed, with grotesque statements such as 'like many other German thinkers, Marx and Engels were powerful but somewhat confused...' (*Planète*, no. 23); or who believe that 'Freud's unconscious is abstract' and used 'obsolete tools of thought', vulgarising on the widest scale possible the loathsome idea that we live in a particularly 'passionate' and luminous age: in this they are merely the shameful inheritors of the belief in the Progress which constituted the strength and the weakness of those they insult. The perpetual self-satisfaction to which they invite the tame masses rests on a generalised *depreciation* of culture, which transforms itself (dialectically, whether they like it or not) into an endless *outbidding*, 'thrilled' by shoddy goods.

The almost total loss of the proper appreciation of poetry; the resignation of artists into the hands of profiteers; the vertiginous disintegration of the most elementary moral notions, those that succeeded in maintaining themselves *against* the Christian framework within which they had been located; the universal fraternisation of the 'submissives' who can no longer be distinguished from one another except by their degree of feverishness; everyone kneeling no matter what procession is passing by, whether from the West or the East, in the name of an ecumenism of the 'formless rush of events' (Hegel), which of course profits only the police and the clergy; all these symptoms, however convergent they may be, could not mask the *disparate* way in which history is in the process of being engulfed.

Faced with this journalistic morass, those who have some awareness about their signature have at least the *elbow room* to affirm their will to be at one with a somewhat more vigorous life and thought. Our activity of *going beyond* easy 'solutions', which is the motor of the present exhibition, comes straight up against the so-called exalting 'myths' which in fact flatter only the most degraded contemporary vanity. What these caricatures of myths could have filched from surrealism must cease to serve the maintenance of the ambiguous excursions that always – be it by an additional diversion – serve oppression.

In their view of the human adventure, founded more on the gleam, even in its eclipse, of perfectibility than on the false broad daylight of 'progress', the surrealists have never ceased to oppose the absolute to the functional, the exalting to the convenient, the controversial idea of happiness to its increasingly intrusive *palliatives*.

Most especially, we choose to deny any living meaning to the expression 'scientific marvellous' which is in such common use today, to the extent of masking the deadly religion of the 'atom'. We know how much expressions in which the signifier solemnly survives the thing signified offer comfort to all forms of fascism. Yes, anything marvellous is beautiful, *but not at any price*: the Marvellous which, according to the unforgettable formula of Antonin Artaud, 'is found in the depths of the Spirit', has nothing in common with the cult of the blind future, the one which appears in glowing red vapours of a 'fantastic' that is quick to revive old terrors and taboos. We will not allow the sacristans of this new Church to dictate our *duty* to us: 'We believe the *duty* of writers and poets is to participate with all their being in the great gestation of laboratories and intellects... etc.' (*Planète*, no. 23).

As it seeks itself and incarnates itself in myths, as it survives their degeneracy or is suddenly reborn beyond their catastrophe, the appetite for the marvellous, inseparable in our view from the call for liberty, finds its source in the most profound and vast reaches of *Desire*, of which 'the study of needs' (and the socioeconomic division it plasters over) offers only a

sinister parody. The hidden ruler of myths, this same Marvellous, commands our constant concern for a morality which, to be 'without obligation or sanction', is no less the elective ground for this requirement which, at each new burst of youth, provokes the same exasperated disquiet among the janitors.

Everything important in the history of culture definitively tends only towards this moment where the extreme *night* of unlimited desire in some way rocks in the dazzling clarity of the 'more consciousness' uttered, each with their own inflections, by all people of vision. In equilibrium with these moments, of the tension they demand or revive, the spiritualist deviation and the 'standardised abasement of the imaginative play in which every person can go beyond themselves appear less as an obstacle than as a fog of timid acquiescence, which will not fail to provoke the cleansing storm for which surrealism will henceforth be assigned as the watchtower.

Pierre Alechinsky, Philippe Audoin, Jean-Louis Bédouin, Robert Benayoun, Jean Benoît, Raymond Borde, Vincent Bounoure, André Breton, Guy Cabanel, Jorge Camacho, Agustín Cárdenas, Adrien Dax, Hervé Delabarre, Gabriel Der Kervorkian, Nicole Espagnol, Claude Féraud, J.-P. Guillon, Marianne Ivsic, Radovan Ivsic, Charles Jameux, Alain Joubert, Robert Lagarde, Annie Lebrun, Gérard Legrand, Joyce Mansour, Jehan Mayoux, Mimi Parent, Nicole Pierre, José Pierre, Georges Sebbag, Jean Schuster, Jean-Claude Silbermann, Jean Terrosian, Toyen, Michel Zimbarca.

Paris, December 1965

This is perhaps the fullest collective declaration produced by the surrealists and yet, ironically, rather than initiating a new beginning as it envisaged, it might be seen in some ways as the movement's swan song. Written jointly by the Paris and Prague surrealists on the occasion of the International Surrealist Exhibition The Pleasure Principle held in Prague in April 1968, it is also a major cultural document of that fateful year. Within months the collapse of the student movement in France, and most especially the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, changed the cultural landscape irrevocably. For surrealism the former catalysed tensions within the Paris group that heralded its fragmentation, while the latter made contact between Paris and Prague difficult and eventually led to the public silencing of the Czechoslovak group altogether. Yet the demands and aims it sets forth still remain vital today.

THE PLATFORM OF PRAGUE

The current declaration, ratified by all of our friends, was drawn up in Prague by the members of the Surrealist Group in that city and those surre-

alists who had come from France, between 5 and 18 April 1968, to take part in a series of events organised around the exhibition *The Pleasure Principle*.

The writers first placed the emphasis on the exceptional affective warmth that marked this encounter. In it they saw one of the determining factors, the result and guarantee of the unreserved accord achieved in Prague,

- with regard to the general perspectives of surrealism today and in the long term;
- with regard to an understanding of the repressive system, in 1968, whose differences really seem, whatever the political and institutional labels assumed, purely conventional;
- with regard to the will to effect indispensable theoretical readjustments, taking into account the evolution of repression, and to define common strategic and tactical means to hold it in check.

We are determined to act in the direction this platform indicates. We have an absolute conviction that, collectively, this fight will never cease.

The accord bears witness to the durable efficacy of surrealist methods to thwart attempts both to stifle by force and to recuperate by cunning. This is certainly due, to a great extent, to the very soil in which it has taken root: surrealist activity, in its triple function (collective, anti-confusional, and directed to the future), has taken place in Czechoslovakia uninterruptedly since 1934 on the basis of the creative strategy defined by Karel Teige.

The current declaration is a theoretical and practical platform from this day on for all the lands where surrealism brings together sufficient energy to work for mankind's complete emancipation. We expect surrealist lucidity to use this platform, not as dogmatic theories, but to give it all the developments demanded by the diversity of circumstances and their evolution, to enrich it permanently through the dialectical play of consciousness and spontaneity.

1. The repressive system monopolises language and restores it to mankind only when reduced to a utilitarian function or distorted to serve entertainment. People are thus deprived of the real powers of their own thought. They are forced (and soon accept it as natural that they should) to rely on cultural agents who offer them standardised patterns of thought that obviously conform to the proper functioning of the system. They are thus led to turn away in distrust and scorn from the internal realm most personal to them, in which their identity is fixed and in which the forces emerging from their dreams or in affectivity frighten them only because the forces of repression then relinquish their place to the pleasure principle. The empty language people are thereby left with is unable to formulate the ardent images which could restore the imperious satisfaction of their true desires. The responsibility for this fact rests to an extent with contemporary art and

the human sciences which, even in self-styled avant-garde formulas, are frequently limited to reflecting passively on the current devaluation of signs, and thereby contribute to the obscuring of thought.

The role of surrealism is to tear language from the repressive system and to make it an instrument of desire. In this sense, what passes for surrealist art has no other aim than to liberate words, and more generally signs, from codes of utility or distraction and restore their purpose as indicators of subjective reality and the essential intersubjectivity of desire as it is reflected in the public mind.

For surrealism cannot escape historical constraint. It is even especially well placed to verify the fallacious character of the myth of progress or historical irreversibility. This forces it simultaneously to effect the revolution of language, as has just been shown, and to take note of the terrible devaluation accomplished in this realm, not only by the regimes of the 'free world', but, on a completely different scale, by Stalinism. Here it is no longer a matter of a reduction to the level of entertainment, but of the corruption of ideas themselves, for only this allows the worst oppression to be concealed by the most radiant words formulated by revolutionary consciousness. If we want to speak in its name, we must start by giving back to words their pure sense of revolutionary necessity. All theoretical reflection and practical action is uncertain if this brutal fact is not accepted: the words revolution, communism, internationalism and even liberty have served in several countries, Czechoslovakia among them, and in places continue to serve as the ideological and moral justification of a police apparatus which has reigned, still reigns or aspires to reign once again as absolute master. We cannot ignore this difficult truth: for many people – including a proletariat and an intelligentsia who are theoretically the holders of the revolutionary spirit – the word revolution signifies a political crime, the word communism the political bureaucratic caste monopolising power and privileges, the word internationalism submission to the imperatives of Russian politics and the word liberty censorship, torture and concentration camps. No one could substitute themselves, by use of words that would become abstract, for those who have physically and intellectually experienced this debasement of language and dissolution of consciousness. But revolutionary consciousness would have repudiated itself if it was tempted to accede, no matter how slightly, to this trend and gave up the task of renewal. On the contrary, the surrealists bring everything into play by giving back these words all their strength, in all their rigorous intellectual significance and affective resonance. They will be careful, though, not to use them as signs of immutable truths. They will not cease to interpret them in the light of the real content that history lends them and will situate them in the context of dialectical thought where the ideas live by the play of constants and variables.

Surrealism is naturally a minority activity. This condition – which we state without pleasure or regret – results from its will to publish its thought in its integrality and rigour, in other words without the slightest concession to didacticism, rather than from any originality in its conception of the world.

It also insists upon its refusal to admit the categories of reality (psychic reality, social reality and natural reality) as definitive. To be resigned to a reality petrified into such partitioning would lead to the privileging of one at the expense of the other two of these three conditions, subjectivity, inter-subjectivity and the objective world. Surrealist efforts precisely tend to the abolition of these categories, which implies recognition of their transitory nature. This knowledge of the actual and provisional state of reality – and, in consequence, of the actual and provisional structure of understanding – profoundly governs the anti-confusional position of surrealism on the relations between art and revolution, a problem which will be tackled later.

Our minority position results finally from the resolution to reject from our ranks any writers who reduce themselves to their writing or any painters who reduce themselves to their painting.

As a minority, surrealism nevertheless addresses itself to everyone: in the end its message will be received only in proportion to the active revolt within each person.

2. The minority condition of surrealism is complex: it is not a matter of a minority schematically opposed to a majority, but of the status of an idea in a nascent state in the midst of received ideas, of a minority acting within a heterogeneous whole made up of a majority and several minorities each of which devotes itself to a specific activity of the spirit. One of the gravest and most false of the accusations made in bad faith against surrealism is that which identifies it as a coterie. The past and the present bear witness to our constant will to be open. There is no domain with which the surrealists do not seek to ally themselves, bearing in mind their own determinations, with anyone who appears to them to possess the vibrant forces of the moment. Not only do we seek their support for our journals and exhibitions, but very often the surrealists step aside in favour of those with whom the reaching of an agreement seems more important than acknowledged disagreements.

In the current circumstances, in the spring of 1968, the surrealists wish to pursue and enlarge the dialogue with all individuals and organised movements, whatever flag they bear in the cultural or political sphere, that hold in check repressive systems, refuse to get caught up in their traps, and attack their innumerable ramifications.

3. Revolutionary theory and practice needs to be rethought from top to bottom. Marxism-Leninism must be demystified. Marxism can again

become an effective weapon in the service of the communist ideal. However, one needs to start by getting rid of its polemical aspect, obliterating the very ideology that arose from the tactical necessity by which Marx and Engels opposed theorists of the highest order like Stirner, Proudhon and Bakunin and rejected, not without deference, the fascinating ideas of Charles Fourier. It is then necessary to separate what within Marx's thought has allowed Stalinism from what should have made it impossible. As for Leninism, there are reasons in particular for great reservations about the commonly accepted principle of the leading role of the party, a principle which has determined the constitution of the Stalinist apparatus. We nevertheless believe that it is not clear that Lenin, in the particular circumstances which conditioned his actions, could have acted otherwise. What is important is thus not to institute a historical trial, but to examine the tragic experience of the deviation of Bolshevism into a police state so that it may serve today's revolutionary vigilance.

Finally it is necessary to fight against economic ideology and principally, when it is a matter of Marxist economic ideology, to re-establish the absolute primacy of revolutionary finality over revolutionary economism. In its current phase, surrealist thought places complete confidence in the dynamism of the spirit of revolt, which gives economic objectives the leading role only in order to bring down all economic ideology, and which expects profound and real transformation only from the reciprocal multiplication of intellectual and emotional processes: their development in Marxism, in psychoanalysis, in the mutual fertilisation of analogy and dialectic, of which the hermetic sciences still bear witness, serves to liberate the instinctive sources from which human societies proceed. Through the simultaneous disintegrations and reintegrations engendered by the struggle between the pleasure and reality principles, these historic forms are called to reflect new states of consciousness, the new stages of the history of the spirit, the victories of thought over its bad conscience, and the imminent triumphs that it will win over its constant division. It is in this sense that poetry constitutes a detonator by means of which thought of the scientific or philosophical type is able to explode the motionless confrontation of classical criticism and reactionary stagnation, in the course of a permanent conflict which sets institutions as well as mentalities ablaze.

This is why the surrealists do not hesitate to put forward the example of revolutionaries who, like Fourier, Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky or Che Guevara, have given revolutionary dynamism its greatest social impact. They will give support with all of their power to new movements which are committed in the same direction, like that led by Rudi Dutschke. And just as the revolutionary economy must, as far as we are concerned, give way when faced with the imperative of revolutionary finality, we declare the primacy of revolutionary activity over its provisional results, over the attain-

ments whose consolidation would consecrate paralysis or lead to grievous harm, as we have seen with Stalinism. In these conditions, the forces of reconstruction must, we believe, rally behind the idea of permanent revolution, the inspired idea of Marx developed in turn by Trotsky, whose current content needs to be interpreted in relation to the new forms adopted by the repressive systems. We are convinced, in this respect, that the state of political attainment in lands where socialism is in the process of reconstruction (Cuba, Czechoslovakia) leaves the future entirely open. In the processes they bring into play, we see the authentic emergence of the union of revolutionary dynamism of the spirit and objective freeing of the conditions of life. Today we see in Cuba and Czechoslovakia two places in the world where the first conditions have come together in which a new human awareness against the repression of right and left can take shape, through direct contact and by the union of the working class and the intelligentsia, without the intermediary of any party apparatus, which always brings with it the danger of a new Stalinism.

The contemporary world situation allows us to hope for a regeneration of revolutionary ideology. The attacks against American imperialism, verbal for the most part, by leaders in Moscow and Peking increasingly fail to deceive those who are its most direct victims. The resistance of the Vietnamese people, the tenacity of the guerrillas in Latin America in spite of the death of Che Guevara, the growing influence of Black Power in the USA itself, bear witness to the accuracy of the theories adopted at the OLAS conference in Havana in August 1967 in support of the armed struggle. At the same time, in the nations where its power is exercised, the authoritarian centralism of Moscow is put to the test. At last, the youth movements in Polish, French and German universities are bringing fresh ferments in the concepts of revolutionary ideology.

Above all, a new phenomenon – of considerable significance – leads the youth in most countries to rise against all forms of repression. Whatever the openly declared objectives of these movements and their differences in different contexts, they have violence and the intransigent refusal of institutions in common. Their spontaneity is not affected by any negative symptoms, as a compliant press would have us believe, since to various degrees it goes hand in hand with gaining awareness of fundamental ideological problems. The leading elements among the young struggle against a technocratic order which tries to install its world domination backed up both by police intimidation and the allure of consumption. It is necessary to adapt the watchword ‘class against class’ which, in many countries, does not adequately express today’s social reality, to the fact that the mechanisms of modern civilisation, through the ‘efficiency principle’ (Marcuse), have brought fresh features to this struggle. One will certainly not find the expression of a genuine political renewal among the apparatchiks of the

Communist Parties (especially those of France and Czechoslovakia), whose essential work consists in paralysing or congealing all revolutionary thought. It is rather among student minorities that one must expect the decisive impetus. 'Surrealism,' wrote Breton, 'was born from a limitless affirmation of faith in the genius of youth.' Only the person who is not yet comfortably settled in the world is capable of assuming the risks that creation and revolt (for us one and the same thing) entail. It is there, and there alone, that surrealism must direct its struggle, because all intellectual and ideological heritage is to be appreciated from the point of view of liberatory transformation and desires. We've had it with the accumulation of knowledge.

4. The surrealists believe that thought interprets the world and contributes to its transformation in several ways which are not mutually exclusive.

The sole philosophical path, in their eyes – as far as Western thought is concerned – is in a transitory way divided into exoteric and esoteric philosophy. In the first they rely entirely on the Hegelian dialectic, in which they recognise an irreproachable organiser of the developmental faculties of the mind. In the second they focus above all on the fact that it offers this same mind the indispensable keys to the analogical interpretation of the rules of nature in their reciprocal relations and development. Dialectics and analogy lay the basis for a new theory of knowledge which needs to set mankind free, not from what is vital in reason, but from what paralyses it in alienating systems: the principles of non-contradiction and identity.

Without prejudice to scientific problems which largely go beyond their competence, at least at present, and without neglecting the discoveries in contemporary sociology, anthropology and ethnology, the surrealists consider the magnificent theoretical and experimental field opened up by Sigmund Freud for consideration of mankind's activity to be unlimited. The interpretation of dreams enhances dreams. Consciousness of the necessity of the oneiric function in life enhances the convergence between everyday life and true life. From the realisation of desire in dream is born the courage to accept magical thought in human life. Exploration of our most complete truth, in which our deepest energies coincide with the most extensive laws of the mind, is subjected to the golden rule of sexuality. The result of the limitless exaltation of desire by knowledge and its limitless stimulation by desire is that love, the carnal love of man and woman, triumphs, carrying with it all the explosive forces of the sensibility and of intelligence.

The criminal hypocrisy of civilisation reveals its full extent in supposed sexual liberation. This is about rationalising love, turning the fascination and desire reciprocally concentrated on a single being into an equation, of perverting the pleasure principle towards a hedonism devoid of mystery or danger – or even to use it for commercial ends. The surrealists have little

interest in appearing to be obscure, compared to the demented imbeciles of progress, when they declare that there is no love without mystery and no physical love without metaphysical love. The quarry to be opened up into the underground forces is still completely virgin soil. The fact that these forces have been hijacked in religious directions and perverted into recent ideological fanaticisms proves to us how necessary it is to return them to their innocence, giving back to the sacred the free space in which its unfolding can obtain the full benefit of light.

For us, as surrealists, poetic thought exists alongside philosophical thought and scientific thought. If it is sometimes difficult to distinguish it from philosophical thought, it nonetheless has its own laws and, by the same token, its rigour. But it maintains free relations with the reality principle, while even the most audacious philosophical and scientific thought permanently submits to it. Poetic thought escapes time to offer mankind the power of prophesy. It becomes thought – practical thought – once it formulates the imaginary while aiming at its transformation into what is real. For ‘all creative strength [...], leading to a new knowledge and a new interpretation of the universe, has its source in essential and irrevocable human dissatisfaction with the realm of necessity’ (Teige).

5. The question of the relations of art (or poetry, or literature) and revolution sustains a polemic devoid of substance between partisans of extreme solutions who, generation after generation, perfect their vocabulary only to try to breathe life into dead ideas. Opposed to the theory of art for art’s sake, as to the theory of committed art, surrealism reaffirms that in the present state of reality – of which people have only one fragmented and alienated perception – art, to be revolutionary, can seek its attainment only on unknown territory, essentially in the most obscure zones of psychic reality. To subordinate it to immediately practical ends would be to lead its energy astray and make it yield to an external constraint which deprives it of all truth by attributing it with only a fictitious efficacy. The only revolutionary ideology which could encompass artistic creation would be that which would recognise in it an immanent autonomy, notably in the determination of its sphere of intervention. Such an ideology would demand that artists accomplish their specific function: to liberate the powers and desires immobilised in the unconscious. At the same time it would destroy whatever authority the priests of art for art’s sake still retain.

6. As regards the sharing of thought, which remains one of our specific pre-occupations, the most lively impetus will be given, in surrealism, to game playing and experimental activities. We place all of our intellectual hopes in both of them. Animating the life of groups, exalting friendship by integrating it with spiritual exchanges, they establish each spirit in a state of intersubjectivity where the facts of the present and individual history

resound in a consonant way. Surrealist games are a collective expression of the pleasure principle. They are increasingly necessary since both technocratic oppression and the civilisation of computers do nothing but inexorably increase the weight of the reality principle. Intellectual blood regenerates itself through experimental activity. We appeal constantly to individual initiatives to propose the axis of research for all. Our current work on poems and transformed objects, on the arbitrary observation of certain places and on dream transference undertaken between Paris and Prague will shortly be made apparent in our journals. [...]

THE VESSELS ALWAYS COMMUNICATE (André Breton)

Philippe Audoin, Jean-Louis Bédouin, Robert Benayoun, Jean Benoît, Micheline and Vincent Bounoure, Guy Cabanel, Margarita Camacho, Jorge Camacho, Claude Courtot, Adrien Dax, Stanislav Dvorský, Vratislav Effenberger, Roman Erben, Guy Flandre, Louis Gleize, Jean-Michel Goutier, Zbyněk Havlíček, Jaroslav Hrstka, Radovan Ivsic, Charles Jameux, Alain Joubert, Gabriel der Kervorkian, Bohuslav Kováč, Petr Král, Robert Lagarde, Annie Le Brun, Jean-Pierre Le Goff, Gérard Legrand, Leila Lima, Sergio Lima, Albert Marenčin, Ivo Medek, Juraj Mojžíš, François Nebout, Paolo de Paranagua, Mimi Parent, Nicole Pierre, José Pierre, Huguette Schuster, Jean Schuster, Georges Sebbag, Marijo Silbermann, Jean-Claude Silbermann, François-René Simon, Ivana Spanlangová, Martin Stejskal, Ivan Sviták, Karel Šebek, Ludvík Šváb, Elisabeth Terrosian, Jean Terrosian, Toyen, Prokop Voskovec, Michel Zimbacca.
Prague–Paris, April 1968

The collapse of the French Surrealist Group during 1969 was viewed by Czechoslovak surrealists with a sense of betrayal, especially given their struggle to maintain a voice in the difficult circumstances after the Warsaw Pact invasion of the previous year. The brutal end to the 'Prague Spring' nevertheless did not immediately lead to a cultural crackdown, and the Czechoslovak Surrealist Group was able to publish the first issue of their handsome journal, Analogon, during 1969. This statement, written in response to Vincent Bounoure's enquiry into the future of surrealism Rien ou quoi? (Nothing or What?) defines their position, and the determination to maintain a critical reappraisal of surrealist precepts, just before the dead hand of Stalinism fell and reduced the group to silence for 20 years. In emphasising the themes of intersubjective communication and explaining the idea of a new mentality, this key text calls for an investigation that still remains in its infancy.

THE POSSIBLE AGAINST THE CURRENT

1. It is hardly necessary to underline the fact that all reflection about the meaning of human activity has its origin in the sphere of the spirit, which

is, by its very essence, the source and the reflection of the dialectical movement. This movement, by which the permanent and reciprocal revaluation of the subjective and the objective, the rational and the irrational, the individual and the collective would be achieved, still tends towards the resolution of their antinomies, but this time as a new source of motor energy. With the help of such a synthesis, which is dynamic in character, an access to profound consciousness, which could be qualified as 'transmental' would open at the same time the path to an intersubjective communication, which would allow for the establishment of a new kind of relations between people. Certainly, today such a communication still belongs only to the domain of the possible. But we know that above all it emphasises inspiration, which invisibly commands our actions, even when we feel assured of judging it only in relation to rational motivations. Some of the most far-sighted scholars, poets and thinkers strove, from the beginning of the century, to discover and understand the relations which exist between conscious and unconscious, and make two universes that were apparently closed to one another communicate. However, one must recognise that we are still only at the beginning of investigations into this realm, and must shield ourselves against the tendency towards resignation which, like its shadow, accompanies human impatience. If we are aware of the importance of the result that surrealism brings within reach in the long run, we must nonetheless, for our part, fix some chronological landmarks, as the means to avoid experiencing particularly bitter disappointments.

We should admit that, before 1968, we had barely managed to do more than discover certain critical functions of imaginative creation, especially those concerning concrete irrationality. If we have been able to define surrealism as a type of imaginative protest and to make clear, to some extent, how it intervened in dialectical relations and was capable of influencing, in its very principle, critical thinking, we have not been capable of escaping this purely negative limitation of surrealism. To a great extent this stems from the historical conditions which reigned at the time in Czechoslovakia, and from the necessity in which we found ourselves to react towards the positive aspects of original surrealism with a somewhat forced scepticism. It was nevertheless soon proved to us (and our encounter during the spring of 1968 with the French surrealists contributed greatly to this) that this scepticism was only an insufficient form of criticism. Aggressive criticism, which makes surrealist thought dynamic, must open up a much more extensive field, and be founded on a positive programme, capable of preventing the alienation of the contemporary world, to which we had until then opposed nothing but mockery. Our encounter with the surrealists who had travelled from Paris also confirmed the old truth that a deep friendship, before being made manifest in actuality, can exist between individuals who, under the influence of similar cultural and historical factors, have an

analogous mentality and refer to a similar scale of values. This is why the common declaration of the Parisian and Prague surrealist groups known as the *Platform of Prague* bears witness to an accord which owes everything to the spontaneous collaboration of all: this text traces the broad outlines of a programme proposed to the surrealist movement the world over. It had nothing of a constraining, constitutive or institutional character.

We made this programme our basis under three headings: *collective*, *anti-confusional* and *directed to the future*, not only in the short but also in the longer term. But it would be premature to try and evaluate now the results attained by the Prague and Parisian groups who intended to apply them. Paradoxically, the period which followed the publication of the *Platform of Prague* spawned many events likely to halt all concerted activity. We remain no less true to its programme, because it takes into account the necessities for the development of vital thought and is opposed to all dogmatism.

That said, the importance we attach, as surrealists, to spontaneity, sensitivity and imagination, in relation to critical thought, would alone be enough to justify the permanent revision of our points of view. In this respect, we think that the revolutionary project has left the critical spirit with its task of demystification far behind it, not only because it includes the idea of changing the status quo of things, but also because it causes certain values likely henceforth to give a meaning to our life to gleam in the firmament. It is for this reason increasingly urgent to revise the idea of revolutionary consciousness, while taking account of the meaning it has gradually acquired in surrealist ideology. In placing the accent on the 'minority' character of surrealism, the signatories of the *Platform of Prague* already showed that in their eyes adhesion to Lautréamont's theory of the universality of poetry and our interpretation of it was only one of the manifestations, today surpassed, of the enthusiasm and messianism of surrealism in its beginnings. History proves that evolution occurs in an irregular way, according to traces that cannot be generalised without making them at the same time entirely fictional. Surrealism's force of inspiration cannot be exercised effectively outside the sphere of the spirit, the domain of a minority. There can be no question, of course, of claiming that surrealism should be reserved to a spiritual 'aristocracy', but of understanding the dialectic of processes which are set to work in society, and the nature of the relations which the individual and the collectivity undertake. The idea of *transforming the world* and *changing life* will not cease to be electrifying for surrealism; but such an idea can become active only through certain individuals, who in some way play the role of 'stimulators' in the sphere of the spirit. Thus surrealism acts on the evolution of the possible, going beyond the simple rationalisation of 'objective reality', which is the domain of the majority. In the revolutionary surrealist

conception, this *consciousness of being a minority* and *consciousness of permanence* confer a specific character to the notion of critique, and distinguish it from formalist or scientific criticism (even if the latter might oppose supra-historical and inert scepticism), as well as from the abstract forms of revolutionary consciousness which lend themselves to various devaluations. If surrealism, at certain stages of its evolution, went beyond the elastic limits of its own possibilities, whether in the sense of political commitment or on the contrary in that of aestheticism, it could not escape internal contradictions and passivity.

This delimitation of the field of application of surrealism needs to correspond to a re-examination of our position in regard to social utopias, in the same spirit which has made us proclaim the necessity for a new myth, and to formulate it theoretically as a surrealist project. Without denying the poetic value of utopias, especially those which inspire the refusal of an unacceptable social reality, or, like that of Fourier, those which contain an explosive charge of irrationality, it seems to us dangerous to abandon ourselves to a certain disarming lyricism, fit only for putting our vigilance to sleep. We will never be able to stress enough that, as far as we are concerned, surrealism should never harbour illusions, nor be satisfied with an emotional attachment to social utopias, as though it was enough to grant mankind a time of festival, during which it would feel that it is temporarily released from social constraints, and so disarm the powers of transgression which are an integral part of its psyche and which set loose the horrors of war, sadism and masochism. Blinded by this illusion, the theorists of the politics of leisure today develop their conception of recreation as a factor of the renewal of forces, and the managers seize hold of this in their turn as an efficient means of manipulating the masses. The gravest failing of this conception is that it does not respect – as moreover in all utopias – the dialectical relations existing between rational and irrational. It leaves the field open to the irrational only within the limits of the festival, while the rest of the time, so much longer and more important because it is devoted to effective activity, remains the domain of rationality. But it is easy to predict that such a system would swiftly become a function of the dominant rationality, which is found to be not only the real source of the will for transgression but which equally determines the methods, times and places of its manifestations. From the dialectical point of view, the solution to the problem of transgression is to be sought in the uninterrupted and reciprocal multiplication, of rational and irrational constituents of *absolute real life*.

The love relations between men and women, often degraded in the current state of civilisation to the point of becoming a trivial farce, could under these conditions no longer be restored in all their harmony, through an ideal accord of souls. What is mysterious and fascinating in these

relations is that the struggle between the intellect and the imagination takes place in a realm where the so-called laws of positive reality are thwarted. This is not a question of emotional harmony, but of a conflict between the possible and the impossible, in which the impossible sets the reality of life in motion. Physical love between man and woman is fascinating precisely because it realises the intimate union of thought and instincts, somehow accomplishing the impossible, and conferring the character of an act of transgression on the sexual act, which is contradictory by nature and not a factor of harmony.

On reflection, we feel that in the *Platform of Prague* we slightly over-estimated the resources of language in general and languages in particular, as though it was possible to give words their primal sense without considering the cultural context in which they are inscribed. One of the greatest merits of surrealism will have been, in harmony with the whole post-impressionist evolution of art, to dispel the illusion which consisted in considering cultural context, whether national or international, to be unique and homogeneous, when in reality it is profoundly differentiated, and this differentiation is at the very origin of its evolution. This is naturally also true at the level of language, and it would be easy to prove that, within any given linguistic environment, there exists not just one language but several distinct languages which, beyond the elementary practice of common language, no longer inter-communicate. Particular linguistic systems, which semiotics develops more or less spontaneously in a vacuum, are dependent on the differentiation of cultural context in several distinct ideologies which are relatively independent of one another. This is why intellectual and artistic activity at the heart of a 'cultural and linguistic' whole (wrongly presumed to be homogeneous) evoke, so much more than a dialogue among people speaking the same language, a succession of monologues spouted in foreign languages, by people who will never meet except to oppose one another in very marginal zones. To restore to words and signs 'their purpose as indicators of subjective reality and the essential intersubjectivity of desire as it is reflected in the public mind', is thus only possible inside a given ideological context (surrealist in the case which interests us) that this very operation tends to elevate to a superior point of intelligibility.

2. The adoption of the *Platform of Prague* has allowed verification once more that the ideas and principles forming the basis of surrealism are strong enough to gather around them, in spite of obstacles accrued due to historical circumstances, people separated by great geographical distances or, sometimes, who seem not to live in the same time. But, precisely because of their strength and rigour, these ideas and principles can equally bring in their wake profound differences between individuals and so place their unity of views in question. We could not contemplate avoiding the fact that

historical conditions singularly complicate the task of those who invoke surrealism and contribute, in certain cases, to exposing their own weaknesses. All of us who cross this age with more or less determination advance on an unsteady ground, and in one way or another we run the risk of losing in one respect something as important as what we want to win in another. Probably no one among us does not question his situation in relation to the age, on the real value it is appropriate to attribute to human progress, and also on what the perspectives of surrealism really are for him. Nevertheless, it should be possible to respond to this fundamental interrogation, without allowing ourselves to be influenced by some or other personal consideration of a depressive character. It is enough to tackle the root of the problem once more, and ask ourselves if it is possible to doubt the substantiality of human liberty, if the desire for liberty constitutes the very meaning of history in its direct relation with the instinctive life of mankind. All our failings, our errors of judgements, our antipathies or aversions, all our weaknesses which come to light 'at the critical moment', the doubts arising because of momentary crises, all the hysterical signs by which the human temperament is capable of losing itself in the swamps of vagueness, all the exclamation marks between parenthesis – all of this defines only the outline of a certain number of people who found themselves confronted with the fundamental problem which has, for us, long ago found a positive solution.

At the time surrealism was taking shape, a discipline was incontestably necessary to assure the cohesion of the movement, even if this was at the price of resounding ruptures, compensated moreover by new recruits who were just as striking. But, in the course of recent decades, surrealism has become established on foundations that are so solid, supporting itself on principles which were confirmed so fully, that it was no longer indispensable to reaffirm them in manifestos, just as it was no longer admissible for them to be held on to by a handful of self-proclaimed ascetics, boasting about possessing the key to the collective treasure. Whether its founders wanted to or not, surrealism has engendered a new type of critical and imaginative thought, whose field of application has not ceased to grow, in such a way that it would be illusory to believe that it could be controlled from a single centre. At the present hour, it no longer depends upon any authoritarian dominance which might control the application of its principles, since it no longer has any need of it. The principles are in themselves strong and vibrant enough to forego a tribal system that would always risk reverting to dogmatism. They constitute so many selective instruments available to those who are or would be the most capable of using them to the full. There is no reason to fear, if only for a moment, their falling into the hands of epigones, arrivistes or saboteurs, whose incapacity would soon be apparent.

Therefore we do not think that surrealism can be identified with the life and work of André Breton, even though he gave the movement its greatest impetus and gave it cohesion at a time when this was indispensable. It would be to betray his thought, and be unworthy of the ideas he defended, to condemn them to a sentimental cult, when on the contrary they possess the creative force of myth. Breton has moreover not been alone in advancing these ideas. Some of the greatest minds of the century contributed to it, for example, let us not be afraid to say so, those who, for one reason or another, abandoned surrealism after having enriched it. It is because Aragon was at the source of the immense explosive surge of sarcastic criticism, in fact of surrealist criticism, that his later rallying to socialist realism has justified condemnation with the greatest severity! It is because Vítězslav Nezval, in the course of the first period of surrealism in Czechoslovakia, passed on to it the flame of his lyricism that his subsequent evolution must be considered a veritable intellectual impoverishment. Besides, the sole fact that Breton's model of surrealism differed from that of Teige, although both had a common origin and developed in parallel, proves that the identification of surrealism with Breton not only has no basis in historical truth but promotes a total misunderstanding of the dialectic of the processes of realisation in the sphere of the spirit.

If then, in the current state of the development of the Surrealist Movement, we refuse to bow either before legend or dogma, either before a personality or an authoritarian dominance; if we consider the domain appropriate to surrealism as delimited in a very concrete way, at the same time as broadly open to external contributions capable of enriching it, this does not at all indicate that we pronounce ourselves in favour of an unconscious eclecticism when it comes to matters of opinion, or of an intransigent individualism, and against collective experience, at the level of action. We think on the contrary that surrealism, by reason of its own character as well as the extent of its own development, not only allows but also requires frequent confrontation with points of view adopted by the various groups which invoke it in various countries, and which could thus collaborate freely together and, when appropriate, co-ordinate their activities. It is striking to observe that these groups do not form themselves according to geographical distribution, but on the basis of a community of opinions (witness the current co-operation of Jean-Louis Bédouin, Vincent Bounoure and Jorge Camacho with the Prague Surrealist Group). It is because such a community of opinions exists, combined from specific qualities appropriate to each, that the commerce of minds and the character of permanent critical conflict it assumes in the surrealist sphere can engender new creative forces, capable of reviving surrealism in the coming phases of its development.

Although the community we are speaking about would be clearly defined as the very basis of surrealist activity, and it would be sufficiently open to

welcome various external tendencies and contributions, it is no less indispensable that it develops in a specifically surrealist context, the latter having an importance of the first order, under the double relation of ideology and semiotics, for the increasing differentiation of modern culture. It would be unthinkable to separate ostensibly 'living ideas', defended by surrealism, from the very notion of surrealism, because only the surrealist context and its evolution gives those ideas their concrete meaning. Each idea defended by surrealism bears in itself, under its present and living form, the whole history of the evolution of surrealist thought, the detours, errors, progress and discoveries that have generated it, that have given it its importance and conferred its conflictual and evolutive function. If it is possible to define the surrealist state of mind or the role poetry played in the struggle against technocratic repression, it is uniquely because this state of mind and this role are gradually fixed with the help of the struggles it needed to conduct and that only a narrow pragmatism could consider as historically vague or negligible material. What history actualises in a permanent way acts by reason of the emotional charge humanity can extract from it. Therefore, history is associated with every act, however spontaneous, and equally it participates in the elaboration of the myth of this human spirit, of which one can only await a future moral renaissance.

Many times in the history of surrealism tendencies to the occultation, if not the liquidation of the movement, have emerged. André Breton himself was once tempted by this solution, doubtless influenced by the example of Lautréamont. If these tendencies are once more manifest today, it cannot fail to be noticed that their reappearance is linked to a temporary crisis, which is in turn largely determined by questions of the people involved. But only those who are incapable of challenging acquired values, and so contributing to the evolution of surrealism, can conceive of its relations with the past as being a subjection, and to fear comparison between this personal contribution and old models. To these people there remains no other course than to seek a more or less disguised way out, so as to avoid the issue.

3. We have, in a collection of collective documents,⁴ testified to the continuity of critical thought and the creative effort which has led us to the positions we currently hold. We will therefore not go over this ground again. We consider the era in which it was inevitable, after 30 years of holidays for the spirit, when obscurities, half-truths and voluntary or intentional mystifications multiplied, which risked altering that which we cherished more than anything, constituting our very reason for living, to be over. We have then often had to resign ourselves to playing the role of historians, having to produce documents, comment on them, which helped us, it is true, to make certain essential themes clear. But to accomplish these

tasks prevented us from being concerned in a sustained way with what we consider most urgent in the present situation.

These are some of the critical reflections the inspired our past activity, the principles we have adopted jointly with the French surrealists in the *Platform of Prague*, and the manifestation of certain tendencies among our Parisian friends. It would be naïve to believe that surrealism, which demands of each and every one of us a total integrity can, particularly at present, escape crises like that which it has just passed through. We remain no less convinced that the *Platform of Prague* defines the essential programme we need to accomplish today and opens a field of activity that is at the same time precise and expansive enough for all those who assert surrealist ideas and principles. We consider it particularly important to devote ourselves to the following tasks:

1. To release the motivations and hopes capable of supporting mankind from the unconscious in which they are still submerged, inspiring and encouraging its critical sense, in the struggle that needs to be led against the numbing effects of the mechanisms of civilisation.
2. To analyse these mechanisms with an indispensable theoretical precision, considering the evolution of systems of repression.
3. To develop a new theory of knowledge, based on dialectics and the principle of analogy, in the conscious and unconscious sphere of the sensibility.
4. To strip away the transgressive elements of the golden rule of sexuality, capable of unmasking rationalist hypocrisy and the commercialisation of sexual cynicism, and to return this cynicism against rationalist exploitation.
5. In opposition to a practice of life governed by utilitarianism, to develop forms of play activity, where the principle of analogy must prevail over the principle of identity thanks to the progress of human consciousness.

It is in this perspective that it appears to be necessary to pose the question of the super-ego in which, under the reign of the principle of identity, obstacles to individual and collective liberty accumulate. We are led to believe that the profound changes currently appearing in the sensibility, especially among the young, are only the external signs of a generalised crisis of the super-ego whose identificatory function, accomplished thanks to narcissistic transfers, is found to be gravely disturbed. Thus we predict that the advent of playful forms of life will cause a proliferation, through the action of the principle of analogy, of the control mechanisms operated by the ego-ideal whose repressive role these forms will limit. In the realm of psychological experiment, the works we have undertaken, in relation with certain psychiatric researches, have shown us, among other things, that an activity of this type has the effect not only of favouring intellectual and

affective exchanges – the circulation of the ‘waters of friendship’ one could call it – between individuals. On the contrary, it is not at all impossible that it might lead us to uncover all sorts of secret inhibitions, for example. A more exact knowledge of this censorship leads to conclusions of a psycho-sociological order. From there it should be possible to define in a dialectical way what might be positive about certain phenomena of the period, and especially in certain manifestations of youth (psychedelia, the underground, etc.) which all more or less respond to Rimbaud’s appeal to the ‘derangement of the senses’.

To conclude, it is hardly necessary to stress that the pretensions of those who flatter themselves about having periodically buried surrealism since 1924 are of as little concern to us as the nervous motions to which some of us are sometimes prone, when they fail to recognise the subtle rules of the game presiding over surrealist activity. As for the question of knowing if surrealism is a timeless ‘state of mind’ or if it is a ‘historical’ movement, it is history itself it must reply to. For us, surrealism is an *open system*, endowed with specific characteristics, and possessing means of investigation which are specific to it and which allow it to define the motor role of the imagination in the motivations of the psycho-social being of today’s mankind. If, as we think, all hope of success in dominating and resolving the problems which the condition of mankind at the heart of the modern world poses is not vain – and this is the very reason for our activity – on the other hand we are in no way interested in the problems relative to the forms that surrealist activity can take externally or not, which relate purely and simply to intellectual juggling. With Jean-Louis Bédouin, Vincent Bounoure, Jorge Camacho and others, to whom we are united in the profound community of views and will to co-operation, we are convinced that surrealism, which opposes the possible to the real, constitutes a source of inspiration capable of reviving, in the most concrete way, human consciousness.

Stanislav Dvorský, Vratislav Effenberger, Roman Erben, Andy Lass, Albert Marenčin, Ivo Medek, Juraj Mojžíš, Martin Stejskal, Ludvík Šváb, Petr Tesar, Alena Vodaková, Frantisek Vodak.

Prague, 22 September 1969

The ‘coupure’ by which those surrealists who accepted the 1969 historical rupture of French surrealism hoped to reinvigorate surrealist activity soon dissolved, but the remnants of the Coupure project continued to work collectively as the ‘Maintenant’ group. Maintenant pursued a sustained, if largely private collective existence and was involved in a number of publishing projects; this seems to have been their only collective statement, addressed principally to former members of the pre-1969 Surrealist Group who had re-embarked on its continuation in the seventies.

WHEN SURREALISM TURNED FIFTY

The Surrealist Revolution sprang from a protest against the situation of the world. With this situation having changed, the protest could not fail to change its nature, but this birth could not fail to mark surrealism.

Born as a protest, surrealism did not have to choose whether to remain so or not. Today, the confusion is such that to *occult* surrealism again becomes the most urgent order of the *day* (not only of the *night*). This perhaps assumes the strategic (and not tactical) renunciation of all protest, especially as it appears in the more recent and supposedly aggressive livery of a contestation that was too quickly proclaimed permanent.

This is why we generously warn those in the literary and artistic order preparing to produce interchangeable interviews as ‘survivors’ or to exercise their vigour in the name of the most ridiculous critical activity: they will do so at their own expense. Can or must surrealism be spoken of as an experience, an enterprise, a struggle? Doubtless the response must lie in the experimental, enterprising and combative *characteristics* of the surrealists, taken as individuals and as a *group*.

As a group without a prior model, for the current signatories it is not with prudence but with audacity that they coldly envisage their ‘irreducible’ differences about the appreciation of a world in which, as bearers of surrealist ideology, they no longer have a specific position, assuming they ever had one. It is not a question of avoiding certain problems by the resumption of affirmations as peremptory as they are monotonous. The recently introduced distinction between a ‘historical’ and an ‘eternal’ surrealism retains the merit of having fixed for good the former’s trajectory, cutting short an adulatory verbiage. What remains, starting (so as to have done with it) with current ‘quarrels’ between surrealists of the most recent stage (1966–69) has not been brought into the public arena, in which we appear unmasked only for a moment, to denounce in advance the masquerade at a given occasion. At least this should have been so.⁵

Beyond hope or despair, the Surrealist Revolution has succeeded *exoterically*. Most of its intellectual aims have been accomplished, its rich resources of suggestion pillaged. The myths it conspired to put into circulation dazzled minds for a while; then became commonplace (black humour) or have given way, dissolving from the stage, in the face of the invasion of miserablist protest: thus the ‘Child-woman’ returns to the shadows. As for objective chance, whose increasingly noisy sequels wore out our eardrums in final years of collective activity, this was not a myth but the most imponderable form of the ‘everyday marvellous’. It has found its only point of impact where it had played its great ‘illusionist’ role in every period – in art.

The objectives of a political nature adopted, and not promoted, let's remember, by the Surrealist Revolution, were not maintained at their true 'level'. The use of a 'revolutionary' vocabulary is today a commodity, though no more to be condemned as such than what results from a generalised consensus: each new Don Quixote is looked after by a vane of the windmill, which gently deposits him, after a 'passage' that happened only in his imagination and to the applause of at least *one part* of the public. This remains: the Revolution should not be confused with a revolution, nor with some revolution. Even the Revolution of May '68 has been grounded, in the sense that one speaks of a boat *running aground* or that SOMEONE has *run it aground*.

Equally, cannot and must not surrealism's fundamental political referents – independently of the persistent atmospherics to which they have given rise, especially from the Stalinists – be submitted to a radical critique, starting with the elementary question: what legitimates a 'commitment' today (in the most general sense, not in the Sartrean sense) and what scope do we attribute to it?

Esoterically, the Surrealist Revolution has neither succumbed nor succeeded, and this is a great relief to us.

If we agree with certain writers that 'values' are the secular residues of myths, and not their sociological support as positivism asserts, the 'values' of surrealism do not escape this law: 'mad love' appears as a transitory secularity, the diffusion of the sacred brought by the Diamond-woman of Novalis, the Essential woman of Baudelaire and the Child-woman of Breton (the list is not complete). These capital letters do not imply archetypes, but the reality of a vision. And since this vision is not abstract, what about love?

Since public taste appreciates the emotions of spectacular eroticism, we can hardly be surprised when the inventory of spices transported through surrealist testimony becomes a hit. It makes us smile when some tastes complain that they are not strong enough. What surrealism has to say about love still shames the mechanics who collect personal anecdotes to distinguish their type and manner. Only the life of each one of us guarantees what love, in the highest consciousness of itself, makes of us and it is to it alone, more or less in obscurity, that we consent with all of our powers. ('All power to love': this 'utopian' watchword alone would be sufficient to seduce us, if it did not appear to reintroduce a transcendence and place the accent merely on the masochistic component of the exchange it assumes, in short if it did not ultimately constrain the power of love.)

If one agrees with Norman O. Brown that analogy, freely practised and pondered, inscribes the Freudian discourse and its continuation as a tracing of *whatever is important* in human activity, as much individualist as socialised; and with Géza Roheim than any myth is the 'product' or 'reproduction' of a dream which refers itself back to the fundamental dream, by

which the sleeper tries to 'relive' the primal scene, and that any myth thus 'prolongs' oneiric life in its regressive search (in the psychoanalytic sense) for the here and now, can and must not a rather more precise image of *desire*, the only organic motor of all emancipation which crosses the threshold of *need*, be developed?⁶ An image which would notably include the paradoxical economy by which the 'regression-development' contradiction, insurmountable as a right, is surmounted in fact, come what may, as much by 'existence' as through the course of aesthetic 'sublimation'.

The very object of this sketch risks giving rise to a sterile misunderstanding. We do not want to reinvent, renew or recommence surrealism. We affirm that we will pursue it *elsewhere* only to the extent that this affirmation will upset various comforts and discomforts, between which the repressed simulacrum of complicity either circulates or does not. We have no particular light to shed on the 'development' of the Surrealist Revolution and, if we could, we would not speak of it in this way, outside what is actually occurring.

If it was once 'clear that surrealism is not interested in taking account of what is produced alongside it under the pretext of art or anti-art, of philosophy or anti-philosophy', one can and must ask if those who still invoke it have considered what is produced under the pretext of anti-psychiatry, anti-cinema, anti-politics or anti-culture, rather (or less) than psychiatry, cinema, politics and indeed culture. Moreover, there reigns in the heart of these antagonisms, a scarcely peaceful but ecumenical coexistence. Such a demand, such an observation involves no *a priori* condemnation, but severely restricts the possibility of any verdict, as of any praise.

Poetry escapes this balancing act. This is because, if it does not lack enemies (among whose number it is incorrect but above all pointless to place Georges Bataille), one could not speak of anti-poetry in their case. Nothing is 'opposed' to poetry since, through a more or less lengthy reciprocal recuperation following a polite and Byzantine skirmish, each anti-discourse has its discourse.

True poetry contains its own critique, not as a dissolvent but as a constitutive element of its being, as indicated by its strange power of growth which has for too long been diverted to didactic ends. Such a power is currently marginal, compared to the advantage accorded down the ages to the *text*, if not to *écriture*, over the word. And by this we don't at all intend the effusion, which quickly became muck-spreading, of the 'subjective', nor some such risible pseudo-prophetic ceremony. The importance given to writing, to 'inscription', testifies, moreover, in a way unknown to its own holders, to a symptomatic disarray as far as the dilution of *everything* into a runaway 'non-difference', by turns bad-tempered and harassed (when it does not feign a fugitive enthusiasm for 'youth'), which is nothing but the

caricature of a true *indifference*, which assumes an ontology, not always our own, but which attains the highest levels of thought.

It is obvious that the movements of needless disquiet and boundless passion, the inflexions from augural non-elucidated accidents, the suspension of thought above everything by a single plait of life, in short, lyricism, have totally deserted the contemporary sweatshops, even if this is where they embroider on the names of Rimbaud or Lautréamont (we choose these 'worn-out' examples deliberately.)

The path of the Surrealist Revolution nevertheless continues. But it is too wide and long for the crowd which thinks it can race to it. Shame about the flower beds.

Before us, the deluges. A rainbow devoid of any other promise, the idea of poetry is not stale. In the end, we make no claims.

Georges Goldfayn, Radovan Ivsic, Annie Le Brun, Gérard Legrand, Pierre Peuchmaurd, Toyen.

Paris, 28 February 1974

The French Surrealist Group continued to meet weekly during the eighties, but its public output was minimal. This is one of its rare manifestations, written to correct the misunderstandings about surrealism that they saw as being perpetuated by Jürgen Habermas, published in English in Praxis International, vol. 6, no. 4 (January 1987).

HERMETIC BIRD

In an article published some time ago by *Praxis International* as well as in one or two other writings by the same author, one can find references to surrealism which unfortunately bear witness to a certain misunderstanding.

First of all Habermas seems to relate surrealism to the phenomena of loss of aura analysed in Walter Benjamin's writings. However, if the aura is, for Benjamin, the cult value of art; if its absolute predominance during the first period of human activity made of its products 'above all a magical instrument' (Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'); and if surrealism is mainly – as Benjamin himself formulated it in a profound insight – a magical experiment with words (Benjamin, 'Surrealism'), how is it possible to describe it as an enterprise of aura destruction? Would it not be rather an obstinate attempt to re-establish the magical aura of art as one could still find it in the so-called primitive societies or in the esoteric (hermetic) tradition? More: isn't it a systematic enterprise of 'auratic' – i.e. magical – metamorphosis of all the activities of the human spirit?

According to Habermas, the aim of surrealism is the liquidation of art, the liquidation of appearance, the liquidation of artistic representation;⁷ in another essay he refers himself to the 'surrealist programme to negate art'.⁸

Could it be that Habermas is confusing surrealism with dadaism? In the same way as Horkheimer's critique of the traditional conception of theory does not mean the 'liquidation' of theory, the surrealist rejection of the traditional aesthetic conceptions does not at all imply the 'negation' of art. Poetry, the imaginary, art, not only are not 'negated' or 'liquidated' but constitute for the surrealists the supreme form of a sovereignty of the spirit to which they highly claim allegiance. Far from aspiring to 'liquidate' poetry, Breton hoped that 'the time is coming when it decrees the end of money and by itself will break the bread of heaven for the earth'.⁹ In relation to plastic arts, surrealism did not aim at liquidating appearance or representation, but to use them to reveal the inner model.¹⁰

The third remark by Habermas (directly linked to the above mentioned) is that surrealism has the intention of implementing 'a false *Aufhebung* of art into life',¹¹ or 'to blow up the autarchical sphere of art and to force a reconciliation of art and life';¹² surrealism would indeed be the historical moment when modern art destroys in a programmatic way the envelope of appearance which ceased to be beautiful in order to find again, de-sublimated, life itself.

Now, surrealists as a matter of fact never looked for a 'de-sublimated life'; on the contrary they consider sublimation 'the Freudian concept which affects the greater part of our deep concerns'.¹³ Their aim is not to 'reconcile' art and life but to change life (Rimbaud) and transform the world (Marx), a truly revolutionary task for which art is one of the most powerful levers, as a ferment of negativity, a principle of the refusal of reality, a magnetic needle always turned towards an absolute break. It is not a question of dissolving art into life (or vice-versa) but to operate an *Aufhebung* – in the Hegelian sense, i.e. a criticism/conservation/overcoming – of the traditional oppositions between dream and reality, reason and folly, poetry and daily life. Of course, this surrealist procedure is a hermetic bird which cannot easily be imprisoned by the spider's web whose threads are the categories of rationalist/analytical, pre-Hegelian and pre-dialectical understanding.

For surrealism, art is always, since its origins, an organic part of life. The problem raised by surrealist activity is not therefore to reabsorb art into life, but to reorient both towards a common pole which is the freedom of the spirit – therefore showing humanity how to get out of this 'pestilential corridor [...] where it becomes morally almost impossible to breathe'.¹⁴

Habermas refers himself to the 'failure of the surrealist revolt' against the institutionalisation of art.¹⁵ It is true that many surrealist artists finished by becoming themselves 'institutionalised'; in our opinion – and Habermas seems to share our view, if we understand his article well – this does not diminish the legitimacy of the revolt. And, above all, the surrealist rebellion aims at much more than the institutional stature of art: it is the whole of the

dominant institutions and ways of thinking of our civilisation that it questions. As long as a few obstinate minds refuse to comply with the total power of instrumental reason, it will be too soon to speak of a 'failure' of the surrealist revolt.

Vincent Bounoure, Aurélien Dauguet, Marianne van Hirtum, Michel Lequenne, Michael Löwy, Eleni Varikas, Michel Zimbacca; Prague: Karol Baron, Frantisek Dryje, Vratislav Effenberger, Josef Janda, Jiří Koubek, Albert Marenčin, Emila Medková, Alena Nádvorníková, Ivo Purš, Martin Stejskal, Ludvík Šváb, Eva Švankmajerová, Jan Švankmajer; Buenos Aires: Silvia Grenier, Julio de Mar, Ricardo Robotnik; London: Peter Wood; New York: John Graham.

This detailed document is the major collective declaration of the Czechoslovak surrealists, made while they were still a clandestine organisation confined to samizdat publication, which assesses the group's orientation in the two decades since it was last permitted a public profile. Unbeknownst to them this situation was soon to change, and since 1989 the activity of the group in Prague and Bratislava has bloomed (see our essay 'Years of Long Days', Third Text, no. 36 (Autumn 1996) detailing the history of Czechoslovak surrealism).

THE PLATFORM OF PRAGUE TWENTY YEARS ON

[...] Surrealist thought and surrealist activity, the whole of the surrealist movement, etc., all these different terms, which correspond to different points of view and degrees of generalisation, are defined by the idea of the collectivity. The validity of this theory is confirmed by the history of surrealism and it is only logical that the *Platform of Prague* also insisted on the collective essence of surrealism.

If interpreted dialectically, the relation between individuality and the spirit of collectivity (whose evolution in the framework of a dynamic social structure is reciprocally conditioned and intensified), when studied through the unfolding of the phenomena of crisis at the heart of the surrealist collectivity, reveals an apparently simple fact: it is only the addition of individual manifestations of crisis (creative, critical and ethical failures) which can provoke a crisis at the heart of the surrealist collectivity. Such a conception is not simply quantitative: first because no quantitative change is merely quantitative, since it significantly contains and anticipates a change of quality as well, but also because the level of individuality which, it must be noted, permanently reflects the situation of this collectivity, also justly determines its qualitative level. In short, the spirit of collectivity cannot take shape, evolve, reform or degenerate other than by the intermediary of individual consciousness.

If, as events unfolded, it was revealed that, at the time the *Platform of Prague* was being written, an internal crisis within the Paris group already existed which would last almost three years, and if, despite this, the formulations of the text were solely positive and prospective, without any critical judgement being brought to bear on the preceding evolution (which would doubtless have placed them on more solid bases), one could, from that moment, demonstrate the beginnings of a certain theoretical under-estimation or, in fact, a deficiency of critical power that deliberately confused desire and reality and hid its internal uncertainty behind a sermon of fidelity: 'We are determined to act in the direction this platform indicates. We have an absolute conviction that, collectively, this fight will never cease.' Barely two years of this eternity would pass before many among those who had not hesitated to support these words with their signatures came to the conclusion that the one who gives up the fight is the winner. We have neither the desire nor the means to analyse all the reasons for this defeat. But how did the essential theoretical – and thus necessarily critical – failure of this programme become so deep? For indeed the 'liquidation of the surrealist label' proposed in Schuster's *Fourth Canto* was theoretically justified by the distinction he made between an 'eternal' surrealism, which continues as a 'state of mind', and 'historical' surrealism, whose quality was, among other things, to end as it had begun – surprisingly enough, by a pronouncement from Schuster. The author thereby denies not only his own earlier intellectual evolution and the concrete integrality of surrealism, of which the *Platform of Prague* expressly speaks, but also the elementary principles of dialectical logic. J.-L. Bédouin in particular replied: 'A thought whose viability, considered hyperbolically, can be "eternal" has no meaning and reality except to the extent that it is actualised' ('Surrealism Today'). In an unpublished letter to Jean Schuster, Vratislav Effenberger adopted an absolutely concrete position: 'I do not know what "eternal" surrealism is, and as concerns "surrealism as a state of mind", this too is hard to define without "historical" surrealism. If André Breton could, from the beginning, have recourse to characterising hyperboles to accentuate in just a few words the nature of the new movement, 45 years later we should know that "Swift was surrealist in his rage" only through the intermediary of surrealist ideology, which unveils and respects certain specific aspects of Swift's malice and rage. And it is precisely this ideology that is not "eternal", but "historic", because it evolves according to the evolution of systems of repression against which it turns. Thus, any state of mind can be surrealist only in so far as its surrealist authenticity can be perceived on the ideological or psycho-ideological plan. It too is "historical": I doubt you would find that writing a letter to the Dalai Lama would represent its current expression. Moreover, this supra-historical and non-ideological conception

of surrealism has clearly existed and still exists, and you know quite as well as I do on what side of the barricade.'

In September 1969 the declaration *The Possible Against the Current*, written in Prague, presented a vigorous critique of attempts at liquidation while stressing the theoretical solution to the crisis. This text was essentially a reformulation of the fundamental theses of the *Platform of Prague*, but at the same time provided a critical revision of it (its overestimation of the autonomy of the sphere of language) and brought concrete precision to some over-generalised formulas: first of all, the denunciation of systems of repression, against which surrealism has always stood, the effects of civilisatory mechanisms (which in 1976 would be specified in the collective Franco-Czechoslovak collection *La Civilisation surréaliste*), a commentary on the thesis privileging ludic and experimental forms of life, a characterisation of the minority condition of surrealism, a revision of attitudes to be adopted with regard to social utopias, an accent on the dialectical nature of amorous relationships and so on.

This was the work of V. Effenberger in particular, who formulated the perspectives needed to surmount the movements of crisis and open surrealism up to new horizons. But even a pertinent theoretical solution cannot legitimate the internal meaning of surrealist activity, a meaning which has always been conditioned by spontaneity and transgressivity. And it is precisely the absolutely spontaneous development of one of the thesis-programmes of the *Platform of Prague* ('As regards the sharing of thought, which remains one of our specific preoccupations, the most lively impetus will be given, in surrealism, to game playing and experimental activities. We place all of our intellectual hopes in both of them.') which has led to the reconstruction of collective activities ('individuals have genuinely studied if they have studied together', Jan Švankmajer) and therefore the reconstruction of the Surrealist Group in Czechoslovakia. It has become the point of departure for the collective activities of the group during the seventies. The cycle of interpretation games from 1970–76, research into the interpretive functions of the activities of creation, not only represented the continuity of the surrealist programme from the end of the sixties, which responded to the problematic of interpretation, but also to the continuity of surrealist principles, in other words the constancy of its functions. In the beginnings of the movement, surrealist games constituted one of its principal hearths of interest as a point of intersection of cognitive functions, communication and integration. The ludic and experimental pole of surrealist activities thus also creates a reservoir of potential creative collectivity which reveals, when this potential is manifested through the individual communications of the participants, the still unknown territories of internal and external reality in their dialectically conditioned character and in their continuity.

The cycle of interpretation games is uninterruptedly linked to an experiment with analogical models of thought (*Panorama* – a game in which one seeks analogical representations) to a collective experiment with tactile objects, and many others. In theory, it can be affirmed that ludic experiences accompany the activities of the Surrealist Group in Czechoslovakia in every thematic sphere with which they are linked, whether in the realm of Interpretation, Analogy, Eroticism, Fear, Dream, Humour or surrealist poetry. So it is no coincidence that the Game itself is for this reason found at the centre of our interests (the thematic collection *The Game*, 1985–87). The results of these ludic experiences finally enter freely into the system of references of surrealist theory, indicating new methods and helping to verify or make clear and actualise the surrealist variants, constants and dominants. And thus these surrealist games, this ‘collective expression of the pleasure principle’ (*Platform of Prague*) and the domain of analogy, reflect the real transformations of surrealism as a system of knowledge.

The collection *La Civilisation surréaliste*, published in 1976 by Éditions Payot, can justly be considered the culmination of the whole preceding collaboration between the two groups and one must note the co-operation between Vincent Bounoure and Vratislav Effenberger as an example of an exceptionally fortunate congeniality.

The partial specification of certain principles constituting the basis of the *Surrealist Civilisation* project found its expression in discussions which unfolded in the heart of the Czechoslovak group during the second half of the seventies. Its object was the double isolation we understood to characterise the group’s situation in existing cultural and social conditions. It is useless to underline the fact that the totalitarian regime’s forces of repression forbade us any possibility of expressing ourselves publicly; this was clearly recognised, and besides we were not an exception in this respect. But equally we no less knew that we necessarily stood, by the nature of our views, outside the conglomeration that is considered and considers itself as representative of opposition to the reigning totalitarian regime in our country. While the frontiers towards repressive power are clearly traced, the demarcation of the second front is vaguer and the numerous spaces of no man’s land demand exploration and continual re-examination.

It is certainly necessary to define this concept of double isolation more carefully, for it is tightly bound up with the historical conditions in our country. In so far as material oppression is concerned, we are perfectly well aware that we are in the same position as surrealist groups in Western Europe, where it is imposed by the intermediary of the so-called art market, which introduces a different problem into this isolation. On the other hand, the specific nature of the condition of Czechoslovak surrealism was fully

manifested at the time of a certain liberalisation of political and cultural life in the second half of the sixties. Even then surrealist activity needed to assert itself against the decrepit pressure of Stalinist conservatives, but also against the unfavourable tendencies of partisans of liberalisation who were clearing a path to power by energetically orienting themselves to 'global fashion', and for whom surrealism was not simply outdated but also embarrassing due to its ideological charge.

This explains why surrealism was able to take advantage of autonomous possibilities for publication only during the brief period of 1968–69 when the liberalisers had already retreated but the restoration of Stalinism had not yet put down roots. During this short period the surrealists were able to publish several books which, for the first time in many years and for a long time thereafter, would be the only expression of their point of view: two works by Vratislav Effenberger, part of the complete works of Karel Teige, the *Surrealist Departure Point* collection and finally the first and also last issue of the review *Analogon*. Once more the great silence of official death followed, decreed from on high, forbidding all publications, exhibitions and other public activities, which continues to the present day (the only attempt to organise a collective exhibition, *The Sphere of Dream*, in a small provincial gallery in Sovinec in 1983 was finally banned, although this was only announced on the very evening the exhibition, which had already been mounted, should have opened).

Isolation in the face of the cultural repression instigated by the authorities naturally constitutes a fairly comprehensible phenomenon: we are isolated and isolate ourselves in this sense by our way of creating and thinking. More difficult to understand is the second isolation, which was internal. It is certainly possible to find in the history of surrealism an analogy in the group's opposition as much towards official academicism as towards an 'up-to-date' avant-garde, speculating about the whims of snobs. Although this pattern could equally well be applied to the present, the heightening of circumstances confers a somewhat different quality to this intransigence. If we are today considered by the shipwrecked neo-Stalinists to be inoffensive for the moment, in the eyes of the opposition – both dissidents and exiles – we constitute incorrigible breakers of the only opposition front and sectarians with whom it is not possible to communicate. In 1977 the forces of resistance to uncontrolled Stalinist power, as oppressor of culture, appeared publicly for the first time with *Charter 77*. Among the first signatories was Vratislav Effenberger, whose signature was nevertheless conditional: reserving the right to consider the need for differentiation in the forces forming the opposition later. It might have been thought that the history at the end of the thirties was being repeated. In *Surrealism Against the Current* (1938) Karel Teige wrote: 'Our opponents would clearly like to impose the following alternative on us: either to

suppress us [...] or let us to fall into the ranks of the enemies of socialism. However, we will not allow ourselves to be caught in the inquisitorial tongs of this cleverly elaborated alternative monstrosity [...] Even if we risk being demagogically accused of counter-revolutionary and ideological aestheticism or of fleeing social reality to take refuge in an Ivory Tower, we will not for all that deny that the tasks and problems to which we consecrate all our strength and work are for us no less real and serious than life itself, that they are our life.' And he continued: 'The Surrealist Group, which today finds itself involved in a defensive clash whose polemic unfolds on two fronts, against the academic and conservative right and the reaction as much as against the cultural line of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, is clearly conscious of what is required of the external situation, in which the political tension is reflected, to facilitate co-operation between anti-fascist intellectuals and, in the first place, the collaboration and unity of action of the artistic and scientific avant-gardes which demand, without party difference, the elaboration of an acceptable ideological base of the socialist camp, which above all will be able to maintain in a state of permanent alert the common struggle to support freedom of creation against attempts to bring it to heel.' It might be necessary to say that the two forces of the period before the war have, in the course of time, switched their signs. Bourgeois literature and criticism, official and reactionary, have been transformed as if by magic to become the official textbook in the realm of culture in 'socialist reality', while it would be desirable to compare the dogmatic but nevertheless oppositional attitude of the CzPC, with present-day, equally heterogeneous, oppositions of right and left. This is why surrealism today offends, at a polemical level, the opposition more than the pyramid of 'socialist reality'. And it is exactly around this opposition that we encounter a mingling of haughty intolerance on behalf of the vestiges of the old democratic-bourgeois adversaries, the posthumous descendants of existentialism, the disdainful neo-Catholic 'avant-garde', which secretly drugs itself with a 'surrealist aesthetic', or finally the mystico-folklore underground, which frolics around in happenings between rock music and marijuana. In such circumstances it is clear that surrealist group activity cannot afford to do anything other than unambiguously maintain its intransigent character.

Clearly the extent to which the critical situation at the end of the thirties constitutes a genuinely precise analogy with the current situation can be considered, even if the participants' roles are interchanged. In fact we lack Teige's optimism, or the illusory faith that some forces exist to which it is possible to rally and with which it is possible to have a debate. In his time, Teige could be confident about the non-Stalinist left, which still existed in the West as a real element of the political structure. We know what became of it. So, today, we lack an integration point with the revolutionary per-

spective that Teige had. Secondly, Teige could still argue, his voice could be heard, even if few wanted to hear it; the polemical struggle could unfold publicly, something that has been impossible for the past 40 years (except during that brief period at the end of the sixties). We believe that our views and our thought would become familiar to all those who are like us – and we do not doubt they exist – but we don't know how many there are or where they are, because it is not possible for us to communicate with them.

The concept of double isolation has thus attracted our attention, because it best expresses our situation in life. We nevertheless feel the imperfections hidden within this definition. First, it fails to express activity at all, for it will always continue to carry the mark of a passive definition. The double isolation, as characterised by Teige in *Surrealism Against the Current* and by Effenberger in *Orientation Notes* (1976), is not only the expression of the falling back into passivity due to the cultural politics of authorities in power, but also the expression of a voluntary and conscious will. We have not been forced to do so, but have ourselves deliberately chosen it. We have equally chosen to separate ourselves from the coalition of power and the market. However, the result is that the concept of double isolation will evolve according to the changes in our situation.

Theoretical realisations of some of the positive formulas and conceptions proposed by the *Platform of Prague* and later by the declaration *The Possible Against the Current* converged during the seventies in the concept of the surrealist phenomenology of the imagination. What Effenberger understood by this expression was 'the processes of knowledge of the phenomena of the imagination in its surrealist conception and which tends towards a certain systematisation', and it most especially represents the dialectical transformation of the negative orientation of surrealist creation which, during the sixties, accentuated the 'critical function of concrete irrationality' and ran counter to its noetic and integrating aspects.

But if we want to define the key concept of the surrealist phenomenology of the imagination with greater precision, we are forced to reconstruct once more the evolution of surrealist thought after the Second World War within the frame of the movement in Czechoslovakia, in this case not the frame of a historiographic analysis directly relating to a specific activity but at the level of theoretical, or rather philosophical, generalisation, a level shaped especially by the magnetising formulations of Effenberger.

The period following the Second World War was characterised by the collapse of the perspectives of integration which had contributed to shaping the foundation stones of the ideology and consequently the ontology of surrealism before the war. The idea that it was necessary to realise the social revolution in its Marxist-Leninist conception, as well as the point of convergence of liberty, love and poetry (a point founded on the idea of a permanent liberation of mankind's spirit and its perpetual evolution towards

superior forms and functions), was unable to resist the drastic confrontation with the cruel reality of the war's aftermath. Their inspirational, myth-making nature could not be actively manifested as a ferment, for it did not constitute a harmonious antithesis to the rigorous psycho-social reality, nor did it encourage human consciousness to look for possibilities of a future motor synthesis which would solidify the unity of the ideal and its real corrective. The first task assigned to surrealism in Czechoslovakia by this situation was above all the necessity of posing again the question of continuity of evolution that had become problematic in the sense of an internal re-examination of surrealist principles.

This process, characteristic of the years from 1950 to 1960, was naturally a critique of the poetic, pictorial, dramatic or photographic creations of the group, a domain in which it was necessary directly to verify the viability of the surrealist departure point, conditioned by its capacity to differentiate between outmoded and historically circumscribed conceptions and tendencies and what was still visible in surrealist principles. The sixties were situated under the sign of an increasing theoretical activity which generalised surrealist methods of creation, as well as those that already existed already and had been reactivated, rather than in newly elaborated processes. This activity also gave way to a fundamental re-examination of its philosophical essence in the sense of a kind of return to its roots, that is, to its essential function of a consciousness in opposition. These tendencies were particularly expressed in the work of Vratislav Effenberger, summed up in a representative way in his book *Reality and Poetry*. This was consecrated to the evolving dialectic of the artistic avant-gardes and was published, after years of obstruction by the censors, in 1969, during the interregnum that followed the occupation. In the chapter 'Crisis of Causality and Criteria', the author especially considered the transformation of the philosophical basis which, after the war, was inseparably linked to the formation of the substantiality of avant-garde movements. Effenberger found that the dialectic of systems of integration elaborated by a revolutionary ideology (which included, under a more or less latent or manifest form, the need to transform the world and concretise, for this reason, the potential perspective of systems having only a single historical aim) is non-dialectical, precisely because of this final orientation; and by the nature of its action, the dialectical triad always runs counter to all final and static solutions rather than participate in their constitution. This tendency to a clearly designated finality then becomes the cause of whatever claim to an objectivity of general value the arguments presented by these systems (as far as universal explanation of the world is concerned) have, which cannot naturally be shown and proved except in the order of the ideological system which conditions and determines it. Real functional objectivity is consti-

tuted only as the result of conflicts between the most varied ideological systems and their relative potential objectivities.

With a starting point in these positions, surrealist knowledge is above all oriented towards the study of the critical functions of concrete irrationality, and so of the direct faculty of the imagination to deny, in correlation with intellectual processes, the septic kernels of life, to be an invigorating ferment of the mind making possible the transformation of the crisis of consciousness into consciousness of the crisis (UDS). It will be noted that the faculty of criticising polemics and gradually selecting ideas is the essential departure point for the formation of positive projects, the crystallisation of which is certainly to be expected more from the negation of earlier psycho-social and social evolution than as the effect of the attraction of a perspective of the future. For that reason the ideology and ontology of surrealism have both been defined first of all by an opposition to the repressive consequences of civilising mechanisms and the generalised degradation of the human spirit, and also because the positive criteria of surrealist activity have tended to remain unexpressed. Their latent presence was characterised by a thesis affirming that 'the position "against something" must implicitly be understood as a valuable constructive orientation' (Effenberger).

At the end of the sixties, Czechoslovak surrealism recognised the necessity of going beyond this overly negative project. The existence of a more profound dialectical relation was recognised between the immediate critical factors of the human spirit, which lie at the root of its resistance to domestication, and the perspective of a surrealist civilisation, an idea which had its origin above all in the consciousness of hidden powers of intersubjective communication, capable of opening up and overwhelming the real life (Rimbaud) of socialised man (Marx) in all of its richness. This ideological model, which, we are aware, is a minority position, no longer suffers from the confused nature of an absolutising objectivity, because it reflects its own dialectical nature (that is the relativity and interdependence of concrete perspectives and results), whose incessant confrontation constitutes an evolving corrective which requires that other departure points are continuously formed from the results obtained. Under the influence of this new structure of methods, surrealist knowledge extends its orientation from the study of critical functions specifically created by the dialectic of imagination and intellect to the phenomenology of the imagination, oriented above all towards an observation of the imagination in correlation with its critical and integrating myth-creating functions, in their mutual relation and determination by the action of psycho-social and psycho-ideological factors.

Certainly these determinations are not unilateral: the imagination is not simply a revelatory 'process by which reality moves into the head of man',

for it retroactively creates reality itself, or rather clears a way of access by creating the new imaginary object characterised by the ‘tendency of the imagination to objectify and organise reality’ (Effenberger), in other words through the faculty of dynamising thought in the sense of the most consequent objectification and materialisation of this thought – towards the act.

This new imaginary object in its deepest substance is founded on the complementarity of systems of analogy and dialectic, with the knowledge of its genetic roots and of the means by which it develops being conditioned on a general level by the study of the ways in which these two methods of universalisation are interwoven to exert their influence in unison, and thus how they create the semiotic functions of this object, which act in a creative way as it fulfils its efficacy. The fundamental demarcation of their functionality, according to which the principle of analogy would command the domain of the unconscious, while the system of the conscious would compose itself only of dialectical structures, here represent only a rather schematic solution. In fact, it is not only ‘the dialectic [which] acts inside these two systems. According to Freud, “in the unconscious itself each thought is bound to its antithesis”’ (Effenberger), but the two domains of the unconscious and the conscious also function as contraries, which allows some analogies to penetrate them, and it is by their intermediary that the reconciliation of contraries is then realised retroactively. The dialectical contradiction thereby allows the birth of an unlimited series of analogical correlations which contribute its synthesis to a ‘coming into the world’. ‘Analogy is both a “necklace” placed on the dialectic circuit and a ‘leap’ of speculative consciousness to the centre of this circuit at the moment when intuition appears [...] The supreme relation of the reconciled being ceases to be dialectical, although it becomes analogical’ (Gérard Legrand). The sphere of consciousness is differentiated by these two systems, but at the same time it allows (and expects) their synthesis, which opens here a perspective of surrationality, transforming these two contrary entities on to a more elevated causal plan, of a larger composition which, in opposition to the statically antagonistic concepts of irrationality and rationality, orients the past towards the future as it passes through the present.

These surrealist anthropological perspectives of intersubjective communication and of surrationality, whose common feature is the necessity of surmounting the antimonies between subjectivity and objectivity, start from the hypothesis that a universal essence of subjectivity (Breton) exists, on a common – more or less historically stable – emotional foundation inherent in humanity, from which the magnificent conceptions of the reconstruction of human society also emerge, the compass needle being unambiguously oriented towards liberty rather than the cruellest mass hysterias and cataclysms provoked by the failings and weaknesses of the instincts and

facilitated by their unreflective action. At present this collective treasure is profoundly obscured by a still growing surge of increasingly stupid and schematic human characteristics, transmitted by a technical civilisation which represents just one more demoralising episode in the evolutionary chain of civilisations. It is true that this civilisation has achieved an undisputable success, but only in a very particular technical and economic domain, which is unable to distinguish mankind in the psychological and psychosocial realm other than negatively – for if it surrounds it with an ever greater luxury and comfort which, even if originally intended to liberate humanity from the burden of existential needs and to open up greater possibilities of self-realisation, on the other hand, at present, it ceaselessly empties and impoverishes humanity internally, placing it in a situation in which, not only does it ‘not see the forest’, it is now almost incapable of even seeing the trees (and even if it could, it would find no valid reason to do so).

This, apparently unanswerable, situation which is susceptible to lead so many to an absolutist scepticism which degrades man to the state of an insignificant element in the traps of hypertrophied civilising mechanisms, whose result would be to entice him into a metaphysical shell, adorned with artificial jewellery and the wisdom of a definitively fixed Truth, this situation, by its nature and by the results of our activities, leaves us in no doubt as to its secret dynamic and dialectical nature, and which thus allows us to oppose this reality full of desolation with what we consider, from our point of view, as possible, but that we also hold at the same time as necessary, without, however, trying to concretise definitively how the new principles of civilisation will emerge from the desegregation of existing principles. In a certain sense, surrealism offers a relevant and uninterrupted definition of the relation between the possible and real. If surrealist painting, for example, has already signified for decades that one must adopt a new ‘alphabet’ which manifests itself by what the physicians call a field, one can only point out – now as always – that we find ourselves once more somewhere at an imaginary and paradoxical point of departure.

Among these aspects, surrealist tradition is always living for us. Founded in its initial sources, which are the Hegelian dialectic, hermetic initiation and the mental arc of psychoanalysis, it teaches us that discoveries are not lost or far away, but that they exist within us and prevent us, in the sense of immanence, from achieving the surrealist adventure which is given by destiny.

What attracts us to surrealism, by the effect of enigmatic attraction, is the simplest thing in the world, quite simply this essential curiosity to know that we find in games, a sort of permanent game which has no end, enlarges the mental field in the monist sense of the term, and renews the surrealist collectivity according to co-ordinates that are as traditional as they are new,

finding at the same time an exact and revelatory substance, which radiates from the dialectical singularity defined by Breton.

It is for this reason that surrealism will always be so difficult to grasp.

The Surrealist Group in Czechoslovakia.

Karol Baron, Frantisek Dryje, Jakub Effenberger, Josef Janda, Jiří Koubek, Albert Marenčin, Alena Nádvorníková, Ivo Purš, Martin Stejskal, Ludvík Šváb, Eva Švankmajerová, Jan Švankmajer.

Prague–Bratislava 1987

2 SURREALISM VIS-À-VIS REVOLUTIONARY POLITICS

Surrealism occupies a singular and, at first glance, rather strange position within left-wing politics. Steering a course through the stormy waters between communism and anarchism, the French surrealists for example may appear as political naïfs, tossed from one wave to another as they sought refuge successively in the hands of orthodox communists, Trotskyists or anarchists. In fact, as these documents make clear, the surrealists were far from being politically naïve: fully aware of the political stakes in which they were engaged, they maintained a largely consistent political position through the vicissitudes of the times. They never claimed any political efficacy for surrealism, and refused to see this as their appropriate terrain. Heterodox in their views, both internally and externally, they were always prepared to work with political groups with whom they were in sympathy. What they demanded in return was respect for their independence of action and that political groups should not seek to intrude into the poetic realm where surrealism's most immediate concerns lay. Political groups have found this hard to accept, and the surrealists encountered almost exactly the same problems with anarchists as with communists, both of whom tended to read the surrealists' demand for autonomy of action as mere adventurism.

Indeed, it is not only political groups that have failed to understand this position: so have most commentators on French surrealism. Instead, they have seen the surrealists as confusedly veering from communism to Trotskyism to anarchism. They were never one nor another. In general terms, they sympathised with the fundamental positions of both communism and anarchism, but it was precisely the political position of surrealism to establish its specificity outside the domain appropriate to any political party or ideology: they claimed to be charting a terrain not reducible to the immediate demands of a political struggle. At the same time, they saw it as necessary to uphold fundamental revolutionary principles as they understood them. Two of these in particular call for consideration here, in the commitment to the fundamental Bolshevik tactical watchwords: 'no national defence under capitalism' and 'revolutionary defeatism'. When these principles were renounced by the Communist Inter-

national in 1934, the surrealists saw the very principle of socialist revolution being brought into question. The consequences are significant, for the outcome of the Second World War justified communist tactics, at least in the immediate term, since fascism was defeated. The cost of doing so has rarely been examined even to this day; it was, as the surrealists foresaw, to capitulate to capitalism, ensuring its survival at the expense of a socialist future. Of course, the extent of socialism's defeat has only been apparent since 1989: in the aftermath of the war, it seemed that the revolutionary flame was still being kept alive, and indeed the communists emerged from the conflict, especially in France, as heroes of the resistance.

In the two decades after the war Stalinism had an ascendancy that was hard to resist, and it should not be forgotten that the generation of French intellectuals who grew up in the immediate post-war era were formed by the precepts not of revolutionary Marxism but of Stalinism (this includes almost all those thinkers connected with post-structuralism and post-modernism). Against this trend, the surrealists were among the few actively seeking to expose the Stalinist lie. Not that they were not themselves also victims of it; as is well known, even before the war, some leading surrealist voices (Aragon, Éluard and Tzara most prominently) had succumbed to the Stalinist lure. After the war, the reconstitution of the French group was impeded by arguments about the relationship with the PCF (Parti Communiste Français), which the declaration *Inaugural Rupture* was to bring to a head, and the group was re-established with a clear and unequivocal anti-Stalinist position. Elsewhere, the situation was less clear. The Czech group had before the war already settled its scores over Stalinism: Karel Teige's important statement, *Surrealism Against the Current*, in 1938 definitively provided the Czech group with an anti-Stalinist platform it would never compromise, but condemned it to four decades of almost continuously clandestine activity. British surrealists, taking to the streets in May 1938 to join protests over Chamberlain's policy towards fascism, struggled to maintain collective political unity in the face of widely divergent individual stances. In Romania and Yugoslavia, however, Stalinism made surrealism impossible, with some members going into exile, while those who remained settled for an uneasy relationship with the regime in power when they did not actively support it. The Belgian group also maintained an ambivalent relation to Stalinism, long refusing to condemn it directly and collaborating with the French surrealists of the pro-PCF 'Revolutionary Surrealist Group'. The cultural power of the French Communist Party remained pervasive until 1968, when its reactionary role during the events of May, followed by its support for the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August, tore open the final curtain on the extent of its betrayal.

This important document, published in L'Humanité, 21 September 1925 and signed jointly with the Clarté, Correspondance and Philosophies groups, establishes the Parisian surrealists' initial political position (one that already suggests a willingness to make common cause with other collective initiatives and signals a nascent interest in communism as a potential model for revolutionary action). It is especially notable for its internationalism and rejection of any kind of national sentiment ('for us France no longer exists'), something that will remain a feature of surrealist sensibility.

THE REVOLUTION FIRST AND ALWAYS!

The world is a crossroads of conflicts that, for anyone giving this any thought, goes beyond the frame of a mere political or social debate. Our times are singularly bereft of seers. But for anyone not completely devoid of insight, it is impossible not to be tempted to work out the human consequences of an *absolutely shocking* state of affairs.

Beyond the reawakening of the self-respect of peoples long under the yoke who appear to wish for nothing more than to regain their independence, or the unappeasable conflict of the work and social demands at the very heart of the states still holding power in Europe, we believe in the inevitability of total deliverance. Beneath the ever harder blows inflicted on it, in the end humanity will have no choice but to change its relations.

We are fully aware of the nature of the forces currently agitating in the world, and we wish, even before taking a roll call and setting to work, to proclaim our total detachment, and in a sense our purification, from the ideas still rigidly forming the basis of European civilisation, and even from any civilisation based on the unacceptable principles of necessity and duty.

Even more than patriotism, a hysteria like any other but one that is more empty and fatal than others, we find the idea of the fatherland repellent, truly the most bestial, least philosophical concept to which we are expected to submit.¹

We are certainly Barbarians, since a certain form of civilisation disgusts us.

Wherever Western civilisation reigns, all human attachment but that motivated by self-interest has ceased, 'money is the bottom line'. For over a century, human dignity has been reduced to the level of exchange value. It is already not only unjust but monstrous that those who do not own property should be subjected by those who do, but when this oppression goes beyond the bounds of simple wage labour, and assumes the form of slavery inflicted on populations by international high finance, it becomes an iniquity for which no massacre could begin to atone for. We do not accept the laws of economy or exchange, we do not accept the slavery of work, and on an even wider scale we proclaim ourselves in revolt against history.

History is ruled by laws conditioned by individual cowardice, and we are certainly not humanitarians to the slightest degree.

Our rejection of acquiescence to any law, our hope in new underground forces capable of overthrowing history, of breaking the derisory train of events, makes us turn our gaze towards Asia.² For we vitally need liberty, but a liberty modelled on our most profound spiritual needs, on the strictest and most human demands of our flesh (in truth it is always others who are afraid). The modern age has had its day. The stereotypical cycle of Europe's gestures, acts and lies has completed the cycle of disgust.³ It is the Mongols' turn to set up camp in our squares. Don't think for a moment that the violence we commit ourselves to will ever catch us napping, will ever outstrip us. Yet this is still not enough to suit us, whatever might happen. What matters is to see our attitude as just the total confidence we have in our common feelings, more specifically our feelings for revolt, upon which the only things of any value are founded.

Putting our love of revolution and our decision for effective action in the as yet still narrow domain we currently occupy above any differences we may have, we: *Clarté*, *Correspondance*, *Philosophies*, *La Révolution sur-réaliste*, etc., make the following declaration:

1. We do not believe *your* France could ever follow the magnificent example of an immediate, total and irreversible disarmament shown to the world in 1917 by Lenin at Brest-Litovsk, a disarmament of incomparable revolutionary value.
2. As most of us are of conscription age and officially destined to don the abject sky-blue uniform, we vigorously and in every way reject the idea of this kind of subjugation in the future, given that for us France does not exist.
3. It goes without saying that, under these conditions, we fully approve and endorse the manifesto issued by the Action Committee against the Moroccan War, all the more so since its authors are threatened with legal prosecution.
4. Priests, doctors, lecturers, literary figures, poets, philosophers, journalists, judges, lawyers, policemen and academicians of every hue, all of you who signed that idiotic document *Intellectuals Rally to the Fatherland*, we will take every opportunity to denounce and confound you. Dogs whose ears prick up at every chance to profit from the fatherland; merely thinking about gnawing on this bone gets you going.
5. We are the revolt of the spirit; we consider bloody revolution to be the unavoidable revenge of a spirit humiliated by your works. We are not utopians: we conceive this Revolution only in social form. If people exist somewhere who may have seen a coalition rise up against them such that no one can condemn (traitors to everything that is not liberty,

rebels of all kinds, hostages to common law), let them not forget that the idea of revolution is the individual's best and most effective safeguard.

Georges Altman, Georges Aucouturier, Jean Bernier, Victor Crastre, Camille Fégy, Marcel Fourier, Paul Guitard, Jean Montrevel.

Camille Goemans, Paul Nougé.

André Barsalou, Gabriel Beauroy, Emile Benveniste, Norbert Gutermann, Henri Jourdan, Henri Lefebvre, Pierre Morhange, Maurice Muller, Georges Politzer, Paul Zimmermann.

Maxime Alexandre, Louis Aragon, Antonin Artaud, Georges Bessière, Monny de Bouilly, Joë Bousquet, Pierre Brasseur, André Breton, Jean Carrive, René Crevel, Robert Desnos, Paul Éluard, Max Ernst, Théodore Fraenkel, Michel Leiris, Georges Limbour, Mathias Lübeck, Georges Malkine, André Masson, Dušan Matić, Max Morise, Georges Neveux, Marcel Noll, Benjamin Péret, Philippe Soupault, Dédé Sunbeam, Roland Tual, Jacques Viot.

Hermann Closson.

Henri Jeanson.

Pierre de Massot.

Raymond Queneau.

Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes.

August 1925

The Spanish Revolution began in 1931 as anti-clerical demonstrations, something the surrealists greeted with euphoria, and which offered the French group an opportunity to signal its intractable opposition to all manifestations of religion, its apologists and its institutions. This was a position that also directly concerned the group's own sphere of action, since when this tract was issued it was less than six months since the work of two Spanish surrealists – Buñuel and Dalí's film L'Âge d'or – had been physically attacked and subsequently banned in France for outraging a specifically Catholic morality.

BURN THEM DOWN!

Be tolerant. Keep your faith or convictions firmly, but admit that others may have a different faith or conviction. Do nothing, say nothing that may harm another's belief: it is an intimate part of human consciousness, so delicate you may bruise it if you brush against it.

Paul Doumer

Beginning on 10 May 1931, in Madrid, Córdoba, Seville, Bilbao, Alicante, Malaga, Grenada, Valencia, Algeciras, San Roque, La Linea, Cádiz, Arcos de la Frontera, Huelva, Badajoz, Jerez, Almería, Murcia, Gijon, Teruel, Santander, La Coruña, Santa-Fe, etc., crowds set light to churches,

convents, religious universities, destroying the statues and paintings inside, wrecking the offices of the Catholic press and, booing, chased out the priests, monks and nuns, who soon fled the country. The first five hundred buildings consigned to the flames will not be the last of this assessment by fire. Bringing the great materialist illumination of torched churches to oppose the bonfires once erected by the Spanish Church, the masses will be able to find enough gold in the coffers of these churches to arm themselves, join battle, and transform the bourgeois revolution into a proletarian revolution. The restoration of Notre-Dame del Pilar in Saragossa, for example, required a public subscription of twenty-five million pesetas that was already half collected: let them claim back this money for revolutionary needs, and pull down the del Pilar temple where a virgin has for centuries been exploiting millions of people! Each church still standing, each priest who can still hold mass, endangers the future of the revolution.

To use every means to destroy religion, to obliterate even the last remains of these shadowy monuments in which people prostrated themselves, to annihilate the symbols artistic pretext might vainly seek to save from the great popular rage, to disperse the priesthood, pursuing it to its final hiding places, this, in their direct understanding of revolutionary tasks, is what the crowds in Madrid, Seville, Alicante, etc., undertook of their own accord. Everything that is not violence when it comes to religion, the old scarecrow God, the parasites of prayer, the professors of submission, can be seen as an accommodation with Christianity's countless vermin, which must be exterminated.

What for centuries were the auxiliary troops, the mainstay of their Most Catholic Majesties is today prey to a beautiful flame which one truly hopes will soon reach every monastery, every cathedral of Spain and the world. Already the Soviet Union, where hundreds of churches have been blown up, is transforming houses of worship into workers' clubs, potato barns and anti-religious museums. The Spanish revolutionary masses immediately attacked those priesthood organisations which everywhere, along with the police and the army, are the defenders of capitalism. But if the bourgeois republic's first task was to declare that the Catholic faith remained the state religion, its second was to use force to put down those who had resolved to pull down all the sacred buildings. The attitude of the apostolic nuncio towards Mr Alcala Zamora has delivered the republican and socialist government into the Pope's hands. Summary justice has already brought communists found guilty of iconoclasm to the firing squad. The bourgeois waverers will let the clergy keep its lands because the dividing up of ecclesiastical property can only signal the dividing up of civil property. The bourgeoisie needs priests to maintain private property and wage-earning. They cannot separate Church from State. Only the terrorism of the masses will carry out this separation: the armed and organised proletariat will win

out over the bankers and industrialists who have been clinging to the priests' black skirts. The anti-religious front is the essential front of the current stage of the Spanish Revolution.

In France, the growth of the anti-religious fight will support the Spanish Revolution. French atheists, do not tolerate, in the name of a fallacious right to asylum, despite the separation of Church and State proclaimed in 1905, the establishment of congregations that have fled revolutionary Spain on French territory. It is enough for scandalous demonstrations to have greeted the arrival in Paris of King Alfonso. An agitation worthy of the magnificent bouquets of sparks appearing over the Pyrenees will force the faithful to be turned back at the frontier, where courts of public safety will soon await them. By the same action, demand the repatriation, along with their father confessors, of the royal bandits who must be judged by their erstwhile subjects, their lifelong victims. Your proclamations of solidarity with the armed workers and peasants of Spain will be turned into the next stage of your fight for the seizure of power in France by the proletariat which alone will be able to sweep God from the surface of the Earth.

Benjamin Péret, René Char, Yves Tanguy, Aragon, Georges Sadoul, Georges Malkine, André Breton, René Crevel, André Thirion, Paul Éluard, Pierre Unik, Maxime Alexandre; and ten signatures from foreign comrades.
May 1931

This declaration makes clear the surrealists' view of the pacificism promoted by those who wished to ignore the threat posed by fascism in Europe; characteristically, the French group's demand for representation at the forthcoming International Anti-war Congress in Amsterdam took the form of both a stinging attack on two of the Congress's organisers, Henri Barbusse and Romain Rolland, and an uncompromising call not for an end to war but to the escalation of class war.

MOBILISATION AGAINST WAR IS NOT PEACE

THE REASONS FOR OUR SUPPORT FOR THE INTERNATIONAL ANTI-WAR CONGRESS

Lenin was always the sworn enemy, and not just during the war, of calls for peace issued in any abstract sense. He considered that the abstract propaganda of peace *is capable only of sowing illusion, of having a pernicious influence over the proletariat in inspiring in it humanitarian trust in the bourgeoisie and turning it into a pawn in the hands of the secret diplomacy of warring nations.*

(*L'Internationale Communiste*, no. 10–11, p. 455)

Calls must be issued so as to explain to the masses, through propaganda and agitation, the irreducible difference existing between socialism and

capitalism (imperialism), and not for the *reconciliation* of two opposing classes using a language that ‘groups together’ the most diverse things. (Lenin, quoted in *L’Internationale Communiste*, no. 10–11, p. 459)

It is precisely the ‘reconciliation’ of two opposing classes that more than ever, and better than ever, has been the task of the promoters of the International Anti-war Congress, whose manifesto appeared simultaneously in *Monde* and *L’Humanité* on 27 May.

Let’s look at the evidence:

We call upon every person, all the masses, regardless of their political affiliations, and all workers’ organisations – cultural, social and trade union – all forces and all organisations, all together! Let them unite with us in a great international anti-war congress.

(Extract from the appeal by Romain Rolland and Henri Barbusse)

This is how the evangelical goodwill of intellectuals of every hue grasps the opportunity, once again, to show itself and to play havoc under the pretext of peace on Earth.

We must once again denounce the baleful and profoundly counter-revolutionary role of intellectuals taking such an initiative. Barbusse, author of *Jesus* and Romain Rolland, defender of Gandhi, are the most dangerous promoters in the world today of a humanitarian mysticism that is generally more pernicious than any abstract theology.

How can we not deplore the fact that, having denounced the counter-revolutionary activity of Henri Barbusse, editor of *Monde*, ‘In placing himself above party loyalty, this organ has situated itself uniquely above the Communist Party’ (*Littérature de la Révolution mondiale*, special number on the Kharkov Congress, p. 107) one can, in spite of this fact, allow him to take on such a task in the company of Romain Rolland, whose abominable campaign in support of Gandhi must not be forgotten:

All peoples slit each others’ throats, in the name of the same principles, hiding the same self-interests and the same Cain-like instincts. All of them – nationalist, fascist, Bolshevik, oppressed peoples and classes – all of them claim the right to violence, which they refuse to all others, that seems to them theirs by law. Today things are even worse: force *equals* right. It has devoured it.

In the collapsing old world order, no sanctuary or hope remains. No great enlightenment.

(Romain Rolland, *Mahatma Gandhi*, Paris: Stock 1930, p. 181)
this same Gandhi who

... every time the South African state found itself threatened with serious danger, suspended Indian non-participation and hurried to its defence. In

1899, during the Boer war, [he] founded an Indian Red Cross, twice cited in dispatches, with honourable mentions for its bravery under fire. In 1904 plague broke out in Johannesburg: Gandhi organised a hospital. In 1908 there was a native uprising in Natal: Gandhi participated in the war, leading a troop of stretcher-bearers, and was publicly thanked by the Natal government.

(Romain Rolland, *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 26)

the same Gandhi who cynically confessed: 'My dear friends, no Englishman has co-operated more fully than I in the Empire over 29 years of public activity. On four occasions I have placed my life in danger for England...' (Gandhi, letter to the Englishmen of India, 1920, quoted by Romain Rolland in *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 26).

Under these conditions, how could one deny that the most grossly idealist manoeuvres are masked by this pseudo-revolutionarism, and that all this madness will end in asking the betrayed masses of the capital of the League of Nations to kneel in a prayer for peace and a *Credo* such as this:

1. I believe in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas, etc.;
2. I believe in the Varnashrama Dharma (caste discipline), etc.;
3. I believe in the protection of cows in a much wider sense than is commonly admitted, etc.;
4. I do not reject the cult of idols.

(Gandhi, *Credo*, quoted by Romain Rolland, *op. cit.*)

How can one not see a grave threat in such farcical statements when even *L'Humanité*, the central organ of the French Communist Party, is open to the clerical cowpats of André Baillon, worthy of *La Croix*:

More books exist than there are in the Westmalle library, which only has one, but there are not more readers. Words are vain. Just one suffices: God.

(*L'Humanité*, June 1932)

'Father, I once had a fortune, and I wasted it; it is evil, is it not, to abuse the gifts of God in this way?'

'He has not punished you too much, since he has bestowed upon you the grace of poverty.'

(*L'Humanité*, June 1932) [...]

Is this proletarian literature? We haven't forgotten how this populism was condemned in Kharkov:

Populism: the group of writers who claim to represent the life of the working masses, and which above all offers a peasant literature, one which is specifically reactionary.

(*Littérature de la Révolution mondiale*, special number on the Kharkov Congress, p. 104)

Since its establishment, *Monde* has become the platform for this specifically reactionary literature; as an organ for undesirable elements or dissidents from the right of the Communist Party or left-wing elements of the socialist and radical socialist parties, it has always tried to use this to derive watchwords and ideologies from the Third International to the benefit of the Second International:

In its current form *Monde* is the promoter of ideologies hostile to the proletariat. As such, this newspaper is an obstacle to the creation of a revolutionary and proletarian literature in France, and to be its editor is in direct contradiction with a revolutionary writer's duty.

(*Littérature de la Révolution mondiale*, *op. cit.*, p. 111)

This critique of *Monde* as made at the Kharkov Congress is more relevant than ever today, and remains within the remit of surrealist critical activity, as defined by Aragon in number 3 of *Le Surréalisme au service de la Révolution* when, in his last moments of lucidity, he denounced Barbusse as a counter-revolutionary.

Since then Aragon, having renounced all intelligence and honesty, has become a convert to the most ominous methods for the cretinisation of the masses. We now see him expressing these extraordinary claims with a real red bluestocking casualness:

Unemployed workers, do you want to see an end to this? [...]

Unemployed workers, for you to be no longer chased out from under bridges? [...]

Unemployed workers, for you to be left alone on your benches?

(*La Lutte anti-religieuse et prolétarienne*, April 1932)

Bleating prayers for peace, idiotic whining about poverty, that's what it's come to, and it's something we won't allow to continue.

WE SUPPORT THE INTERNATIONAL ANTI-WAR CONGRESS AND DEMAND REPRESENTATION ON IT.

And if we support it, despite the serious reservations we have had to express about the personalities of Barbusse and Rolland, it is because we have every confidence, as we always have had, in the revolutionary workers' masses and organisations who must play their part in it to win out over the confusionism of those intellectuals who are the auxiliary troops of their oppressors:

The communists can and must be able to convince the working masses that they are the only logical and honest partisans of peace, that only they can show the sole true path to universal peace, making it clear and

unequivocal that such a peace can be obtained only after and not at all before the violent overthrow of the capitalist regime the whole world over.

(*L'Internationale Communiste*, no. 10–11, p. 458)

This is how to curb the threats of a bigoted idealism. This and only this will put us out of harm's reach from all the successors of Christianity, all the representatives of God on Earth, whatever form their defrocking takes, of the God who is 'that complex of ideas born of human enslavement to nature, tightening that oppression, and undermining the class struggle' (Lenin).

The idealism and mysticism of non-violence are the basis and support of every imperialism and every oppression.

The Fourth Congress of Soviet Trades Unions, in the face of the imperialist war already unleashed in the Far East and of the armed intervention threatening the dictatorship of the proletariat, calls upon all exploited classes and oppressed peoples to act resolutely against any new imperialist war. The experience of the Soviet Union's working class has shown that the ways and means to free itself from war lie in the breaking out of crisis, the transformation of imperialist war into civil war (Lenin), the merciless struggle under the banner: 'The principal enemy is to be found in our own country.'

(*L'Internationale Communiste*, *op. cit.*, p. 449)

But if the proletariat of every country know where to find their principal enemy, they also know that the 'national' bourgeoisies have the headquarters of their cartel in Geneva, under the flag of non-violence.

In response to the official pacifism that transmutes the guardian angels of peace into ministers of war; in response to the oldest of imperialist formulas: 'If you want peace, prepare for war'; finally in response to the hypocritical watchword of waging war on war, we say: 'IF YOU WANT PEACE, PREPARE FOR CIVIL WAR.'

André Breton, Roger Caillois, René Char, René Crevel, Paul Éluard, J.-M. Monnerot, Benjamin Péret, Gui Rosey, Yves Tanguy, André Thirion.

Nothing is more fallacious than the opposing of the period of peace to the period of war within a capitalist regime. It seems to us impossible to justify, except in an entirely relative way, the call for peace put forward by the organisers of the Geneva Congress, in an era when imperialism multiplies its extortion on all sides. At the very least it is crucial to separate such a watchword from the deplorable illusions which it cannot but give rise to and against which, with increasing contrast, the symptomatic events whose theatre is the world scene join forces: better by far than to fly to the aid of a passivity that is already too great through the evocation of the 'atrocities'

supposedly inherent in war is to draw the attention and anger of the proletariat to the daily crimes of which capitalism is guilty. In peace as in war the risks are the same for those who rise up against their oppressors. We think particularly here of the abominable sentence just passed on the sailors of the Peruvian cruisers *Almirante Grau* and *Coronel Bolognesi*, who rebelled last 8 May to protest against poor diet and excessive discipline: eight men condemned to death and immediately executed, fourteen men condemned to fifteen years' prison and twelve to ten years by the court martial of the dictator Sanchez Cerro, who reinstated the death penalty specially for the occasion. We react angrily to this cowards' vengeance, and we count on the revolutionary organisations of the proletariat to carry out the appropriate response against its perpetrators. It is on the denunciation of such crimes and their rational explanation by the contradictions in which capitalism struggles that we believe the accent of the intervention to which the working classes are urged in Geneva should be placed.

June 1933

Trotsky's expulsion from France in 1934, where he had been exiled since the previous year, brought the following protest from the surrealists. The Parisian group's final break with the French Communist Party would not occur until the following year, but an increasingly sympathetic interest in Trotsky's position (indeed, it was Trotsky's biography of Lenin that had first stirred Breton's admiration for communism) was just one more indication of its imminent arrival.

‘PLANET WITHOUT A VISA’

A particularly dangerous bandit, the author of more crimes than can be counted and, moreover, an habitual maniac, someone especially to be refused acknowledgement and shelter, a veritable plague on the human race: this is the portrait the great press has striven for some days to give us of Leon Trotsky. Granted French residency a year ago, he was suddenly served with an expulsion order.

Trotsky's presence on the outskirts of Paris being made known was enough for him to be singled out by the clamour of a public opinion prepared and misled by the carefully set up imbroglio of the ‘Prince affair’ and the clever accusations about a ‘mafia’.

Over the course of events, detective fiction, having lost its way somewhat these days, might find an invaluable new twist in the episode of the ‘Barbizon villa’. The four ‘German shepherds’ who, according to the newspapers, barked non-stop up against the park railings, suggest to us that not all the dogs are inside; landlords, bourgeois journalists, White Russian chauffeurs driving dandies in their cars could be more than a match for them. Trotsky's luggage, apparently, is extensive. No doubt it also amazes

people that his secretaries and messengers did not look to be hooligans and, if he does not show himself, does not offer a helpful target for a bullet, we are told it is because he is aware of his infamy, because he is afraid.

We deplore the way our comrades at *L'Humanité* refuse to see anything in this anguished series of persecutions against one man but a 'publicity campaign' he could turn to his advantage. On the other hand, they rightly recognise that Trotsky's expulsion marks the beginning of repressive measures against émigré communists and prepares the way for banning revolutionary organisations. Already a law unused since 1848 has been revived to prosecute revolutionary newspapers.

The extraordinary 'interim government' imposed by the 6 February demonstrations proclaims itself the resolute enemy of the working class. On the economic level the decreed laws provoke an increase in unemployment, followed by the arrest or sackings of hundreds of militants guilty of having protested against the brutal reduction of their means of existence. On the political level, this government equally displays its full measure in expelling Trotsky, not without organising provocations against him and breaking with this country's famed tradition of hospitality.

We may be far from sharing all his current ideas but this makes us all the more at liberty to associate ourselves with the protests already registered against the measures to which he is subject. It should be known that our indignation about this knows no bounds. At this new stage of a difficult road, we greet Lenin's old comrade, the signatory of the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty, an exemplary act of revolutionary science and intuition, the organiser of the Red Army which allowed the proletariat to retain power in spite of the capitalist world's coalition against it, the author – among so many others no less lucid, no less noble and no less dazzling – of this formula which for us offers a permanent reason to live and act: 'Socialism will signify a leap from the reign of necessity to that of liberty, so that the people of today, currently filled with contradictions and lacking harmony, will clear a path to a new and happier race.'

André Breton, Roger Caillois, René Char, René Crevel, Paul Éluard, Maurice Heine, Maurice Henry, Georges Hugnet, Valentine Hugo, Marcel Jean, Jean Lévy, Fernand Marc, Marie-Louise Mayoux, Jehan Mayoux, J.M. Monnerot, Henri Pastoureau, Benjamin Péret, Gui Rosey, Yves Tanguy, Robert Valançay, Pierre Yoyotte and a significant number of foreign comrades.

24 April 1934

This declaration brought the attempt to collaborate with the PCF to a definitive end. It followed the International Congress for the Defence of Culture, at which Breton and the Czech surrealist Vítězslav Nezval, among

others, were refused the right to speak (Éluard was eventually allowed to deliver Breton's speech on his behalf, but only after midnight, to a virtually empty auditorium). The distrust it displays towards the PCF was to be fully confirmed by events to come.

WHEN THE SURREALISTS WERE RIGHT

[...] The International Congress for the Defence of Culture unfolded under the sign of systematic suppression, a suppression both of genuine cultural problems and of voices not recognised by those in charge. Addressed to this majority of those once more ready to conform at all costs, the words of Gide's opening speech ('In the capitalist society in which we still live today, it seems almost impossible to me for literature to have any other value than as an oppositional literature') assumed a rather cruelly enigmatic meaning. Partial suppression of the talks by Magdeleine Paz and Plisnier, a pure and simple spiriting away of that of the Chinese delegate, a complete withdrawal of Nezval's right to speak (how many others, well aware of these methods, preferred not to be there at all!) while – in between moving declarations like those of Malraux, Waldo Franck or Pasternak – we were treated to a bath of platitudes, infantile viewpoints and sycophancy: those who claimed to save culture chose an insalubrious climate for it. The way this Congress, supposedly of revolutionary inspiration, was concluded exactly mirrors the way it was announced. Proclaimed by posters with certain names emphasised in large red letters, it ended in the creation of an 'International Association of Writers for the Defence of Culture' led by a committee of 112 members and headed by a presidium that had apparently designated itself since neither the participants nor the audience of the Congress were consulted about its composition.

We can do no more than formally notify this committee and this association of our distrust.

We foresee that people will try to use such a declaration against us. Relentless in the destruction of the ideological position which for long was theirs and still is ours, those former surrealists who have become, or aspire to become, Communist Party functionaries – people who, no doubt to atone for past extravagances, have abandoned all critical judgement and are keen to be examples of the most fanatical obedience, ever ready to contradict to order what they had affirmed to order – will of course be the first to denounce us as professional malcontents and systematic opponents. We know what revolting content people have managed nowadays to read into this last injustice: to declare doubts about one or another aspect of the official Party line is not simply to submit to ridiculous purism, but is to do disservice to the USSR; it reveals a will to drive militants from the Party, to support the enemies of the Proletariat and to act 'objectively' as a counter-revolutionary. 'We do not at all consider Marx's theory as

something perfect and unquestionable; on the contrary, we are convinced it has only provided the basis for the science that socialists must necessarily perfect in every way if they do not want life to overtake them.' Lenin, in saying this in 1899, gives us every reason to think that the same thing today goes for Leninism as for Marxism. At the very least, this assurance does not incline us to accept uncritically the current watchwords of the Communist International and to ratify *a priori* the modalities of their application. We think that if we accepted these watchwords before having admitted them, we would be failing in to our duty as revolutionary intellectuals. If we are not able to accept some of them, we would also be failing in this duty in not signalling that the whole of our being comes to grief in this and that we need to be convinced in order to be able to *follow* with enthusiasm.

Once more we deplore the increasingly habitual recourse to certain discrediting processes whose effect within the revolutionary struggle is to fortify rather than reduce specific resistances. One of these processes, which merely comes to aid the preceding one, consists in representing the various oppositional elements as an organic, almost homogeneous, whole, activated by strictly negative feelings, in short as a single agent of sabotage. To express a doubt about the justice of any received instruction is enough to have you thrown into the category of public criminals (at least this is how they ridiculously seek to portray you to the masses): you are under orders from Trotsky, if not from Doriot. Socialism is being built in a single country, they tell you; you must consequently place blind faith in the leaders of this country. Any objection or hesitation you make, on whatever issue, is criminal. This is the point we have reached, this is the intellectual liberty allowed us. Each person who thinks in a revolutionary way today is faced with a thought that is not their own, one that depends all the more on their ingenuity to foresee and all the more on how adaptable they can claim to be in justifying it from one day to the next.

In this frenetic need for orthodoxy, it is impossible for us – as much for one person as for a party – to see anything other than the mark of an enfeebled self-consciousness. 'A party proves to be a victorious party in dividing itself or in being able to survive division', said Engels, and also: 'The solidarity of the proletariat is realised everywhere in groups of different parties entering a life and death struggle like the Christian sects at the time of the worst persecutions in the Roman Empire.' The spectacle of the divisions in the workers' Social-democratic party of Russia in 1903 and of the many and lasting conflicts of tendencies that followed from it, *joined to the extreme possibilities of regrouping the most divergent – but intact – minds who support a truly revolutionary situation*, constitutes the most striking verification of these words. In moving beyond the threats and attempts at intimidation, we will continue striving to remain intact and, for

this reason, without claiming to be free of error in all circumstances, to safeguard at any price the independence of our judgement.

We maintain a total claim to this right, used so widely by 'professional revolutionaries' in the early part of the twentieth century, for all revolutionary intellectuals, *on condition of their effective participation in their efforts to unite that the present situation, dominated by consciousness of the fascist threat, could necessitate*. Our collaboration in the 10 February 1934 'Call to the Struggle', entreating all workers, whether organised or not, to effect unity of action with urgency, bringing to this realisation 'the very great spirit of conciliation called for by the gravity of the situation', our immediate adherence to the Committee of the Vigilance of Intellectuals, our enquiry about unity of action in April 1934, our presence in the streets at the heart of all the major demonstrations of working-class strength, suffice, we think, to confound those who still dare to speak of us in our 'ivory tower'. We no less persist in defining ourselves as specifically as possible on the intellectual level and intend in this domain to abandon nothing which appears to be valuable and appropriate to us, just as we reserve the right, if the need arises, faced with any decision or measure going against what most profoundly touches us, most especially if it is sanctioned by some collectivity (always easy to abuse), to say: 'We consider this unjust and false.' We support the free assertion of all points of view, and the permanent encounter between all tendencies constitutes the most indispensable ferment of the revolutionary struggle. 'Everyone is free to say and to write in their own way', affirmed Lenin in 1905. 'Freedom of speech and the press must be total.' We consider any other conception reactionary.

Unfortunately opportunism today tends to annihilate these two essential constituents of the revolutionary mind as has until now been manifested: the rebellious nature – dynamic and creative – of certain beings, their concern fully to fulfil their pledges to themselves and to others in common action. Whether in the political or the artistic domain, these two forces have always carried the world forward: the spontaneous refusal of the conditions of life proposed to mankind, together with an imperious need to change them on the one hand; lasting fidelity to principles or moral rigour on the other. They cannot for years be contained, or even combated, without danger, by merely substituting the messianic idea of the accomplishments of the USSR, of what cannot fail to be accomplished by the USSR, an idea which imposes *a priori* an homologation of an increasingly serious politics of compromise. We say that the revolutionary spirit cannot fail to be diminished and compromised by being committed ever further along this road. On this point, we are again assured by what Lenin wrote on 3 September 1917: 'The duty of a revolutionary party is not to proclaim an impossible refusal of any compromise, but to know, *through all compro-*

mises, the extent to which these are inevitable, while maintaining fidelity to its principles, its class, its revolutionary aims, to the preparation of the revolution and the education of the masses it must lead to victory.' If these final conditions are not fulfilled, we think it could no longer be a matter of compromise, but rather of dishonour. Must we accept that they are completely fulfilled?

No. Like so many others we were disturbed by the declaration in which, on 15 May 1935, 'Stalin understands and entirely approves the policy of national defence France has made to maintain its armed forces at the level required to protect its security'. If, with all our strength of will, we initially refrained from seeing this as more than a fresh and especially painful compromise by the leader of the Communist International, we still immediately formulated specific reservations about the possibilities of people here hastily accepting the course that flows from it: abandonment of the watchwords 'transformation of the imperialist war into civil war' (condemnation of revolutionary defeatism), denunciation of the Germany of 1935 as alone fostering an imminent war (discouraging, in the event of war with Germany, any hope of fraternisation) and awakening of French workers to the idea of patriotism. We know what attitude we have opposed, from the first day, to these directives. This attitude conforms on all points with that of the Committee for the Vigilance of Intellectuals: against any policy of encirclement and isolation of Germany, for the concrete offers made by Hitler for the limitation and reduction of armaments to be examined by an international committee, and for the revision of the Versailles Treaty, the principal obstacle to peace, by political negotiation. It hardly needs to be underlined that, since then, the signing of the Anglo-German Convention, allowing rearmament of the German navy, has sanctioned this viewpoint, even to the extent that this convention can only be considered a consequence of the policy of increasingly isolating Germany, which the Franco-Soviet pact suddenly makes still more apparent.

In itself such a consideration does not dispose us to accept, under whatever transitional form it is offered, the idea of a fatherland. Any sacrifice on our part to this idea and to the infamous duties resulting from it would immediately conflict with the most certain initial reasons we had to be revolutionaries. Well before becoming aware of the economic and social realities outside of which the struggle against everything we want to overthrow would obviously be a waste of time, we were convinced of the absolute inanity of such concepts and on this point nothing will ever force us to make an honourable reparation. What is going on in the USSR and how have things come to this? No denial has been issued to efface the shadow spread so widely by Vaillant-Couturier, Thorez and their consorts since 15 May. We have spoken of how this shadow was cast over the Inter-

national Congress of Writers (on whose platform the author of this desperate chauvinism insisted on making this symbolic show: 'I still get told: "You are the one who has forced Germany to rearm, by the humiliation imposed on it for 20 years with your treaty." I reply that this humiliation must be accepted. Germany wanted war (I mean the German people, as far as a people want something) and lost. These things must be paid for. I have no taste for forgiveness.'⁴

If we protest violently against any attempt to rehabilitate the idea of a fatherland, against any call, under a capitalist regime, to national feeling, it has to be said that it is not only because, with the most profound and detached part of our being, we are quite incapable to subscribing to it, not only because we see in it the activation of a sordid illusion that only too often has caused the world to go up in flames, but above all because *with the best will*, we cannot avoid considering it to be a symptom of generalised and identifiable evil. This evil is identifiable the moment this symptom can be compared with others that are equally morbid, together constituting an homogeneous group. Lately we have often been reproached for echoing protestations against the spectacle of unhealthy moralising in certain Soviet films, such as *The Road of Life*. 'The wind of systematic cretinisation blowing from the USSR...' one of our correspondents was not afraid to say about this. Some months ago, reading the replies in *Lu* to an enquiry by Soviet newspapers about the current idea of love and the communal life of men and women in the USSR (it involved a selection of revelations by men and women, each more harrowing than the last) made us reflect for a moment on whether the above position – that we have not yet accepted as ours – was really excessive. Let us not dwell on our disappointment over the wretched results of 'proletarian art' and 'socialist realism'. Equally, we cannot help but be concerned about the *idolatrous cult* by which some self-seeking zealots are striving to commit the working masses, not only to the USSR but to the character of its leader ('everything is due to you, great educator Stalin' from the former bandit Avdeenko which cannot but bring to mind the 'whatever you want, general' of the revolting Claudel). But if we still retained any doubt about the desperate end result of such evil (it is not a question of failing to recognise what the Russian Revolution has been and has achieved, it is a question of knowing if it is still living and how it fares), we are bound to say it would be unable to withstand reading the letters *Lu* reproduces from *Komsomolskaia Pravda* in its issue of 12 July 1935 under the title: 'Respect your Parents' [...]

It is a waste of time to emphasise the completely conformist poverty of such lucubrations, which would not find a place in any privately financed newspaper here. The least that could be said about them is that they seem to give some delayed justification to the infamous 'Decrepit Moscow', coined by someone who, whether it is decrepit or not, today fawningly

accommodates himself with no difficulty to its service in exchange for a few small favours. Let us limit ourselves to recording the process of rapid regression which suggests that the family will follow the fatherland in emerging unscathed from the dying Russian Revolution (what does André Gide think about that?). It only remains to re-establish religion and (why not?) private property, and we can say goodbye to the finest socialist conquests. Even if it means provoking the rage of their sycophants, we ask if any other consideration is needed to judge a regime by what it does, from this perspective the *current* regime of Soviet Russia and its all-powerful leader is responsible for this regime turning into the very negation of what it should be and has been.

We can only formally signify to this regime and this leader our distrust.

André Breton, Salvador Dalí, Oscar Dominguez, Paul Éluard, Max Ernst, Marcel Fourrier, Maurice Heine, Maurice Henry, Georges Hugnet, Sylvain Itkine, Marcel Jean, Dora Maar, René Magritte, Léo Malet, Marie-Louise Mayoux, Jehan Mayoux, E.L.T. Mesens, Paul Nougé Meret Oppenheim, Henri Parisot, Benjamin Péret, Man Ray, Maurice Singer, André Souris, Yves Tanguy, Robert Valançay.

August 1935

The Belgian surrealists' relations with the communists followed a similar pattern to those of their French colleagues, but they never made a definitive break with the Belgian Communist Party and indeed several Belgian surrealists remained members of the PCB into the fifties. Nevertheless, the following document shows their disquiet with the way the Russian Revolution was developing during the thirties.

THE KNIFE IN THE WOUND

The world revolutionary situation having been seriously transformed by the political events of the past few months, we feel we must to clarify our position in relation to this new fact.

We are especially referring to the Franco-Soviet pact and Stalin's declaration on national defence.

Until now, our attitude to the international policy of the USSR since Lenin's death has been one of discretion. We consider it is necessary as far as possible to avoid criticising the leaders of a people who have accomplished an important revolution and in whom we place the greatest hope. But today we find ourselves forced to ask if the current leaders of the USSR are not dangerously distancing themselves from the greatest and best Marxist tradition, that of the First International, of Lenin and of the Zimmerwald and Kienthal congresses.

It hardly needs saying that we do challenge certain opportunist calculations which are no less rigorously defensible and whose results could only favour the proletarian cause.

Let's remember, once more, what Lenin wrote, speaking of the support given to the Bolsheviks during Germany's military campaign against Soviet Russia by the French monarchist de Lubersac: 'I have shaken hands with the French monarchist, and both of us were perfectly well aware at the time that we were each prepared to see his "partner" hanged. But our interests coincided for a moment. Against the offensive of German rapacity, in the interests of the Russian and international socialist revolution, we used the equally rapacious counter-interests of the opposing imperialisms.'

Lenin concluded: 'I will not for an instant hesitate to enter into a similar "pact" with predatory German imperialism if the Franco-British troops' offensive requires it. And I know perfectly well that my tactics will be ratified by the conscious proletariat of Russia, Germany, France, England and America, in short of the entire civilised world.'

But these declarations, entirely defensible in the very precise sense accorded to them by Lenin, could not serve as a justification for the politico-military alliance between France and the Soviets. We do not hesitate to describe as clearly anti-Marxist, in other words clearly in contradiction with all observable facts, the fact of proclaiming that *only* fascism is preparing for war and consequently that the non-fascist bourgeois nations, even those as ferociously imperialist as France, are a guarantee of peace in the same way as the proletarian state.

This sophism, the most solid point of support of defenders of the Accord, could not impress anyone who retains any critical liberty.

On the other hand, Stalin's declaration has clearly committed the Third International. This will unfailingly throw minds into disarray, and has already done so. This declaration really seems to have been imposed on the Secretariat of the Russian Communist Party by France, requiring as a condition of signing the pact the suppression of all anti-militaristic propaganda within its boundaries. In fact, it seems to us that we are heading towards a Daladier-Blum-Cachin government block, towards a collaboration which would be the concrete manifestation of the retreat of the revolutionary movement.

Contrary to what the defenders of the pact affirm, it is clear that the threats of war are made apparent by the very fact that the capitalist states would be less hesitant about engaging in conflict if they could count on the likely participation of the Communist Parties in national defence.

One further remark: the NEP, which the communist organs keep invoking, was publicly considered a defeat for the proletariat by Lenin, while every effort has been made, by a campaign of opinion we find intol-

erable, to present the Franco-Soviet accord as a victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie.

In Belgium, where the Communist Party is far weaker than in France, we can only anxiously wonder at the possible consequences of the resumption of official relations with Soviet Russia.

Among the arguments presented to those who, like us, are alarmed by the international politics of the USSR, two are especially important:

1. The USSR is threatened by an imperialist offensive with Germany in the forefront.
2. It is legitimate for the USSR to assure its own existence to the point of disinterest in the world revolutionary movement, especially because the proletariat is not yet ready for revolution in Western Europe.

If it was necessary to admit the possibility of a concerted military action on the part of the Western bourgeoisie against the USSR, we think that the Japanese threat and the possibility of an understanding between Japan and Germany is enough to justify, from the strict point of view of the Soviet 'nation', its admission to the League of Nations and its policy of alliances. But what this necessarily entails is that the interests of the USSR cease to be mingled, whatever we might be told, with the interests of the world proletariat. The second argument seems to us even more specious. No doubt it was due to the revolutionary weakness of the Western proletariat that Lenin and Trotsky already decided to concentrate their efforts on Asia, with the idea of using this to have an indirect impact on the Western bourgeois states, in particular England. But, in our view, this incontestable weakness of the proletariat, far from being the justification of the doctrinal and practical abdication proposed to us, could only constrain any revolutionary to an essential Marxist intransigence, which excludes, whatever might be said, no tactical flexibility. We must repeat that we are not politicians. But how can we not be violently against the Franco-Soviet pact, to the extent that it gives rise to an extremely fallacious propaganda, how not to rebel against Stalin's words which threaten the Third International with a debilitating effect that cannot be underestimated, and how not to react in the most categorical way against this subordination of the Third International to the foreign politics of the USSR?

We protest against the notion of the USSR as the 'worker's homeland', because the myth of the homeland, and above all the increasingly discussed notion of a cultural homeland, appears to us dependent on the most pernicious ideology possible. Apart from the word culture justifiably awakening mistrust (we accept culture only to the extent that it takes consciousness of the present with a view to the future), we agree with André Breton when he says in the speech that Paul Éluard gave on his behalf at the Congress of Writers for the Defence of Culture: 'It is a question for us of a

universal legacy which makes us no less dependent on German thought than on any other.'

We once again affirm that the liberation of the human spirit cannot be sought in other ways than those of the world proletarian revolution.

René Magritte, E.L.T. Mesens, Paul Nougé Jean Scutenaire, Maurice Singer, André Souris.

Achille Chavée, Jean Dieu, Fernand Dumont, Marcel Havrenne, André Lorent, André Ludé.

Marcel Lecomte. Max Servais.

1935

Having broken definitively with the PCF, the events of 1935–36 hardly served to bring the surrealists back into the fold; as already noted, the abandonment of the Bolshevik watchwords of 'no national defence under capitalism' and 'revolutionary defeatism' turned the surrealists from disillusion to active opposition. At this time, they came together with members of the by now defunct oppositional Democratic Communist Circle, whose members included Georges Bataille, founding an anti-Popular Front alliance with them that would hold for eighteen months (although the organisation's effectiveness on the wider political stage seems to have been minimal). This is its inaugural declaration.

COUNTER-ATTACK: UNION OF THE STRUGGLE OF REVOLUTIONARY INTELLECTUALS

A. Resolution

1. Virulently hostile to any tendency, whatever form it takes, harnessing the Revolution to the advantage of ideas of nation or country, we are addressing all those who, by any means and unreservedly, are resolved to break down capitalist authority and its political institutions.
2. Committed to success rather than debate, we consider as debarred anyone incapable of ignoring a hopeless political phraseology, and moving on to realist considerations.
3. We affirm that the current regime must be attacked with renewed tactics. The traditional tactics of revolutionary movements have never had value except as applied to the liquidation of autocracies. Applied to the struggle against democratic regimes, they have twice led the workers' movement to disaster. Our essential and urgent task is the constitution of a doctrine *resulting from immediate experiences*. In our current historical circumstances, the inability to draw lessons from experience must be considered criminal.
4. We are aware that the current conditions of the struggle will require those who are resolved to wrest from power an imperative violence

which refuses to surrender it to any other but, whatever our aversion for the various forms of social authority, we do not recoil before this ineluctable necessity, no more than before all those which may be imposed on us by the consequences of the action to which we are committed.

5. We say today that the programme of the Popular Front, whose leaders, within the framework of bourgeois institutions, are likely to accede to power, is destined to fail. The constitution of a government of the people, of a directorship of public salvation, requires AN UNCOM-PROMISING DICTATORSHIP OF THE ARMED PEOPLE.
6. Power will not be seized through a haphazard insurrection. What today determines social destiny is the organic creation of a vast, disciplined and fanatical composition of forces, capable of exercising a pitiless authority when the times comes. Such a composition of forces must group together all those who do not accept the rush to the abyss – to destruction and war – of a brainless and eyeless capitalist society; it must be addressed to all those not prepared to be led by servants and slaves like de la Rocque, Laval and Wendel, who demand to live in conformity with the immediate violence of human existence, who shamefully refuse to allow the material riches owed to the collectivity and moral exaltation to escape them, without which life will not achieve its true liberty.

DEATH TO ALL THE SLAVES OF CAPITALISM!

B. Positions of the Union on Essential Points

7. THE UNION comprises Marxists and non-Marxists. None of the essential aspects of the doctrine it assumes the task of elaborating is in contradiction with the fundamental tenets of Marxism, namely:
 - the evolution of capitalism towards destructive contradiction;
 - socialisation of the means of production as the result of the current historical process;
 - the class struggle as a historical factor and a source of essential moral values.⁵
8. The historical development of societies over the last 20 years is characterised by the formation of entirely new social superstructures. Until recently, social movements were produced only in the sense of the liquidation of old autocratic systems. To effect this liquidation, a science of the forms of authority was not necessary. We on the other hand find ourselves in the presence of new forms which have immediately taken the leading role in the political drama. We are inclined to give priority to the call for the constitution of a new social structure. We affirm that

the study of superstructures must today become the basis of all revolutionary action.

9. The *fact* that the means of production *are* the property of the collectivity of producers incontestably constitutes the foundation of social right. This is the juridical principle which must be affirmed as the constitutive principle of all non-alienated society.
10. We are convinced that socialisation cannot begin with the reduction of the bourgeois standard of living to that of the workers. This is a question not only of an essential principle, but of a method required by economic circumstances. The pressing measures must in fact be calculated with a view to remedying the crisis and not to increase it by a reduction of consumption. The principal areas of heavy industry must be socialised, but it will not be possible to deliver the whole means of production to the collectivity except after a period of transition.
11. We are not driven by any ascetic hostility against bourgeois well-being. We want to allow all those who have produced it to share this benefit. In first place, the revolutionary intervention must have done with economic impotence: it brings with it strength and total power, without which people would remain condemned to disorganised production, to war and poverty.
12. Our cause is that of the workers and peasants. We affirm as a principle the fact that the workers and peasants constitute the foundation not only of all material riches, but of all social strength. As for us, as intellectuals we see an abject social organisation cutting off the possibilities for the human development of workers of the land and the factories. We do not hesitate to affirm the necessity of the death penalty for those who lightly assume the responsibility for such a crime. On the other hand, we do not countenance demagogic tendencies committed to allowing proletarians to believe that their life is the only good and truly human one, and that everything of which they are deprived is evil. Placing ourselves in the ranks of the workers, we address ourselves to their proudest and most ambitious aspirations – which cannot be satisfied within the framework of current society: we address their instinct as people who will not bow down to anything, and to their moral freedom and violence. The time has come for ALL to behave as masters and physically to destroy the slaves of capitalism.
13. We observe that nationalist reaction in other countries has been able to profit from the political weapons created by the workers' movement: we intend in our turn to make use of the weapons created by fascism, which has been allowed to use the fundamental aspirations of people for affective exaltation and fanaticism. But we affirm that the exaltation which must be placed in the service of universal interest

of people must be infinitely graver and more explosive, of a grandeur quite different from that of the nationalists enslaved to social conservation and the egoistic self-interests of fatherlands.

14. The revolution must be without exception entirely aggressive, can only be entirely aggressive. It can, as the history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries shows, be turned to the advantage of *aggressive* claims of an oppressed nationalism; but to want to circumscribe the revolution within the national framework of a dominating and colonialist country demonstrates only the intellectual deficiency and political timidity of those who follow this path. It is by its profound human signification, by its universal significance, that the revolution will lead to a popular uprising, and not by a timorous concession to their egoism and their local conservatism. Everything which justifies our will to stand up against the slaves who govern is in the interests, without distinction of colour, of people across the whole world.

Adolphe Acker, Pierre Aimery, Georges Ambrosino, Georges Bataille, Bernard, Roger Blin, Jacques-André Boiffard, André Breton, Jacques Brunius, Claude Cahun, Louis Chavance, Jacques Chavy, René Chenon, Jean Dautry, Jean Delmas, Henri Dubief, Jean Duval, Paul Éluard, Jacques Fischbein, Lucien Foulon, Reya Garbarg, Arthur Harfaux, Maurice Heine, Maurice Henry, Georges Hugnet, Janine Jane, Marcel Jean, Pierre Klossowski, Loris, Dora Maar, Léo Malet, Suzanne Malherbe, Georges Mouton, Henri Pastoureau, Benjamin Péret, Germaine Pontabrie, Robert Pontabrie, Yves Tanguy, Robert Valançay.

7 October 1935

Any remaining doubts the French surrealists may have had about the Soviet Union and the fate of communism were dispelled once and for all by the Moscow Trials of former Bolsheviks in 1937. Henceforth the French Surrealist Group would be implacable in its opposition to Stalinism. This uncompromising statement was read by André Breton at a meeting of 3 September 1936 called to discuss the trials.

DECLARATION: 'THE TRUTH ABOUT THE MOSCOW TRIALS'

Comrades,

In our basic status as intellectuals, we declare that we consider the verdict of Moscow, and its execution, to be abominable and unpardonable.

With you we categorically deny the validity of the accusation, which the previous history of the accused exempts even from examination despite the supposed 'confessions' most of them have made. We consider the staging of the Moscow trials to be an abject police undertaking, which in scope and

range goes far beyond the one that led to the trial of the so-called 'Reichstag arsonists'. We believe such undertakings dishonour a regime *for ever*.

We associate ourselves, if not with the whole of his political assessments, at least with the lucid conclusions of Otto Bauer's article the day before yesterday in *Le Populaire*: 'What has happened in Moscow is more than a mistake, more than a crime, it is a frightful misfortune which strikes socialism across the whole world, without distinction of spirit or tendency.' It is, in our view, a frightful misfortune to the extent that, *for the first time*, revolutionary consciousness is presented *en bloc* as *corruptible* for many comrades who will allow themselves to be deceived. It is a frightful misfortune in the sense that people towards whom – in spite of everything and even if only by reason of their more or less glorious past – our respect was given, are considered to have condemned themselves and defined themselves as traitors and bastards. When it comes to it, we consider these people, whatever the grave reservations we could make about the reliability of some of them, incapable, *whether through desire to continue the struggle* or all the more so in the hope of escaping death, of denying and debasing themselves to this extent. But this ceases to be a frightful misfortune from the moment it definitively alerts us to Stalin's personality: an individual who has gone so far as to become the great negator and principal enemy of the proletarian revolution. We must fight against him with all our strength, we must see him as today's principal falsifier – he not only undertakes to falsify the significance of people, but also that of history – and as the most inexcusable of murderers.

In these circumstances, we have the greatest reservations about maintaining the watchword: 'Defence of the USSR'. We demand with all urgency that 'Defence of Revolutionary Spain' be substituted for it, while specifying that all our concern today, on 3 September 1936, goes to the magnificent revolutionary elements of the CNT, the FAI and the POUM⁶ which are struggling, indivisibly in our eyes, on the Irun front and in the rest of Spain. We have no illusions that Stalin and his acolytes, who have entered into a pact with the capitalist states, are doing everything in their power to fragment these elements. For us this is a further reason to expect of them, from their combined strength and heroism, the re-establishment of the historical truth trampled underfoot no less systematically in the USSR than in Italy and Germany.

At a concrete level, we intend to act within the Comité de Vigilance des Intellectuels to see strict implementation of the enquiry called for by the POI⁷ about the circumstances unfolding at the Moscow trials, as we already know, without the slightest regard, not only for the personality of the accused, but to *guarantee human dignity*, and to support demands if there are reasons – there surely are – for damage to the international conscious-

ness, the only element of progress, the international consciousness whose prescriptions, comrades, certain of us here consider as sacred.

We once more salute the personality, *one so very far above all suspicion*, of Leon Trotsky. We call for his right to live in Norway *and in France*. We salute this man who has been for us, leaving aside the occasionally *non infallible* views he has been led to formulate, an intellectual and moral guide of the first order and whose life, since it is under threat, is as precious to us as our own.

Adolphe Acker, André Breton, Georges Henein, Maurice Henry, Georges Hugnet, Marcel Jean, Léo Malet, Georges Mouton, Henri Pastoureau, Benjamin Péret, Gui Rosey, Yves Tanguy.

In 1938, André Breton made his famous trip to Mexico, where he met Leon Trotsky. The grave international situation led the surrealists to look for ways to maintain a revolutionary position without compromising the moral attitude they saw as the essential foundation for any revolutionary transformation. This suggested a wider collaboration with other groups maintaining a similar position, something that preoccupied Breton in his conversations with Trotsky and led to them writing jointly the manifesto For An Independent Revolutionary Art. The outcome was the foundation of FIARI (Fédération internationale de l'art révolutionnaire indépendant), an organisation of revolutionary intellectuals attempting to sustain a revolutionary platform in a situation marked by the threats to liberty on all sides in the lead up to the imminent war. While Breton was in Mexico, the surrealists in Paris were pursuing a similar strategy and drew up the following declaration, which may never have been published,⁸ but is valuable as an indicator of the direction in which the surrealists and their sympathisers were moving.

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY UNION

The undersigned artists, writers and intellectuals consider that the present situation, as much within as without, forces them to make public the reasons for their attitude towards current events.

Our immediate enemy is our bourgeoisie, not the armed foreigners formed by workers, victims of fascism, against whom they would like to pitch us under the pretext of a 'crusade of democracies'. We denounce such a crusade, even when presented as a defensive reaction, that masks an imperialist war. It implies a backward step for the working class, led to its death to extinguish its attempts at emancipation. We refuse to envisage any problem other than according to the problems of the proletariat.

We reject any solution which would bring into question the gains made by the proletariat.

Fully conscious of the threats which the sterilising disciplines of censorship imply for human culture, we reject in advance the blindfold or the gag that persuasion or constraint would try to impose on us. Resolved to evade any mass credo, we are absolutely determined to accept no limits on the exercise or expression of intellectual faculties.

We affirm our unshakeable attachment to the principle of the class struggle and to the tactic of revolutionary defeatism in times of war.

Against French fascism, against the Popular Front which disputes the honour of this war with it, after having since 1936 betrayed the June strikes and the Spanish Revolution in July, we insistently implore all workers' organisations who identify with the class struggle and proletarian internationalism to create a Revolutionary Union to wipe out fascism in their own countries and disperse the threats of war through the triumph of the revolutionary actions of the masses.

Adolphe Acker, Jean Aurenche, Asseo, Paul Bénichou, Roger Blin, Jacques Brunius, André Chenot, Espinoza, Paul Grimault, Georges Hugnet, Maurice Heine, Maurice Henry, Marcel Jean, Claude Legentil, Jean Lévy, Léo Malet, Henri Pastoureau, Benjamin Péret, Robert Petitgand, Robert Rius, Gui Rosey, Yves Tanguy.

1938

If the surrealists were by 1937 in active opposition to the Communist Party, this did not at all mean that they had softened their view about the evils of capitalism and its complicity with – even encouragement of – tyranny when it served its own purposes (as crowned by the Munich Agreement signed only days after this declaration). The following denunciation clearly reaffirms their adherence to this revolutionary position.

NEITHER YOUR WAR NOR YOUR PEACE!

The war augured in the hypocritical form of repeated and increased security measures, the war which threatens to rise up from the inextricable conflict of imperialist interests with which Europe is afflicted will not be the war of democracy, nor the war of justice, nor the war of liberty. The states which, for the needs of the day and of history, claim to use these notions as proof of identity acquired their wealth and consolidated their power through tyranny, arbitrariness and blood. The most recent proofs of the indignity of these states still live in collective memory.

They allowed Italy to annihilate Ethiopia notably because any successful resistance against the *white* invader would have encouraged colonial peoples to free themselves from the imperialist grip.

In July 1936, they refused Spain the weapons it had the right to demand, with which it could have promptly crushed fascism, because the victory of

the Spanish workers would have opened fresh revolutionary perspectives to the world proletariat.

They are delivering China to Japanese imperialism.

If today the pseudo-democratic powers stir themselves, it is to defend a state they have created in their own image, a profoundly capitalist, centralised, static, police-like state.

Betrayed on all sides, forgetful of its subversive function, the working class is ready to participate in salvaging the spoils of Versailles. In response to this suicidal attitude, we declare that the only question concerning humanity's social future, the only one able to mobilise its lucidity and creative energy, is the liquidation of a capitalist regime able to survive, in surmounting its own paradoxes and weaknesses, only thanks to the scandalous complicity of the Second and Third Internationals. With the guilty as with their accomplices, with the champions of war as with the falsifiers of peace, no compromise is possible. To an insane Europe of totalitarian regimes, we refuse to oppose a lapsed Europe of the Versailles Treaty, even a revised one. We oppose both – in war as in peace – with the forces gathered to recreate Europe from top to bottom through the proletarian revolution.

THE SURREALIST MOVEMENT

Paris, 27 September 1938

This document aims to clarify the surrealists' position a year after beginning their post-war collaboration with the French anarchists. The somewhat exasperated – if not patronising – tone doubtless stems from the fact that they found themselves engaged in the same battles with the anarchists that they earlier encountered with the communists. The collaboration lasted only a few more months, the separation being made definitive in January 1953, so this document is effectively a leavetaking (and the anarchists refused to publish it). The collaboration between surrealists and anarchists is charted fully in José Pierre, Surréalisme et anarchie (Paris: Plasma, 1983).

BINARY STAR: LETTER TO A GROUP OF MILITANTS

Dear comrades

A few weeks ago, one of us tried to make clear in these pages the meaning of the encounter between anarchists and surrealists.⁹ We very favourably welcomed your article relating to this text, published in the most recent issue of *Le Libertaire*, because it bore witness to a lively interest in surrealism in militant anarchist circles, and so revealed a possibility for future dialogue. Such a dialogue should nevertheless not engender a confusion which would risk breaking out if we were not careful initially to

reaffirm our irreducible position in relation to what is called 'committed literature', 'poetry of circumstance' and 'socialist realist art'. Therefore, we believe it necessary to get down to essentials, although we would have liked to have responded point by point to your article.

Surrealism never wants to confuse the revolutionary attitude it has made its own on the social level and its general poetic attitude, which is no less revolutionary but is defined in a different realm. We have often explained this will, and we refer you to *Position politique du Surréalisme, Le Déshonneur des poètes* and the surrealist note in *Le Libertaire* of 25.2.52. In short, we consider authentic poetry to be revolutionary in itself and submitting it to a circumstantial configuration (for example, to see things in the most favourable light, to assign it the task of exalting a revolutionary uprising) is thus equivalent to both a sterilisation of poetry and a watering down of the revolutionary movement.

You will not be unaware that all reactionary groups hope in this way to thwart poetic expression (see Mr Claudel's odes to Pétain, de Gaulle and the Indo-China parachutists and those of Mr Éluard to the Communist Party Congress and to Stalin). What would you think of us, comrades, if we stooped to their means? But perhaps you object that means are not important; it is the choice of subject that matters? We would reply that a poem to the glory of militant anarchists murdered by Franco would only besmirch their memory because: 1. poetry cannot, without denying itself, sentimentally exploit a particular historical and objective fact which already shocks us in itself and, 2. that such means which habitually lead to justifications for vulgarity are themselves definitively debased.

Once and for all, our poetic path follows another direction, which does not at all prevent us from taking part, individually or collectively, in demonstrations and debates of a purely political or social order, as we have in the series of articles one of us wrote in *Le Libertaire* on syndicalism, to take just one example.¹⁰ These two aspects of our activity are inseparable, but distinct and complementary. Both tend, as is underlined in the note discussed, 'to the integral restitution of the powers of which humanity has been deprived'. You find this phrase vague. Comrades, each time we formulate this sort of necessity, do we have to repeat that for us it could not be satisfied without a social revolution?

You also reproach us with not being clear. This does not, we believe, relate to our collaboration with *Le Libertaire*, but rather on our specifically surrealist (in other words poetic or pictorial) research. Those notions of clarity and obscurity, accessibility and inaccessibility which are justified for all the rational disciplines of the mind have absolutely no currency in poetry and art. Poetry passes through or does not, and this is independent of the degree of culture of whoever has a bone to pick with it. It stems from the former as from a substance one might describe as either a good or a

poor conductor of electricity. Poetry exists, to continue the analogy, when there is a short circuit between the image it proposes and the one humanity makes of the world and of itself. A model standard key does not exist to open all individuals to the poetic shock. Whoever does not identify right away with Rimbaud's 'pavilions of bleeding meat on the silk of seas and Arctic flowers', with Jarry and his 'bat, standing in for the tentacular sex, furred with roebuck, withering his hand of glory in a book of magic spells', or with Lautréamont to be present at the apparition of the oft-repeated 'beautiful like [...] the chance encounter on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella' is alienated, to a large extent, from the possibility of receiving the poetic message. Let there be no misunderstanding. We assert that being able to receive this message is not the exclusive prerogative of intellectuals and that it has, in every way, a greater possibility of blossoming in training centres than in the offices of *Les Temps Modernes*.

Moreover, it is worth dispelling ambiguity about the word hermeticism. You are not unaware that it denotes a philosophical, scientific and poetic tradition going back to antiquity and which has come down to us due to its occultation, for it is a *revolutionary opposition* to the ways of thinking defined in the West by the amalgam of Christianity and rationalism. We think we have explained this point with sufficient clarity.¹¹ But you seem to use the word hermeticism in its most commonly accepted and widest form, embracing everything that escapes rational understanding.

It would have been useful for us to know your conception of art. We know you could not rally to the way the Stalinists' art regilds the blazonry of academicism. You have all seen the 'Soviet masterpieces' in which imagination is resolutely banished, in which the most conventional human attitudes and the most ridiculous appearance of objects are reproduced with greater or lesser minutiae (which provide its criterion). We don't doubt that these paintings are perfectly understandable. One canvas bears the title *Meeting of the Politburo* and effectively portrays a meeting of the Politburo. But, once the small satisfaction of recognising Stalin, Molotov and Voroshilov among the depicted gentlemen has passed, what becomes of the desire, which anyone has to some degree, to discover beyond the known world the image of a perpetually new world of which he would be not so much the astounded witness as both its inhabitant and explorer? Is it the abdication of what really describes an artist – imagination and sensitivity – that you require of surrealist painters? And that would be because, let's speak frankly, you have not been able to get rid of the blinkers imposed by centuries of obscurantism, although you are perfectly aware of the yoke of capitalist oppression and of the need to cast it off. As revolutionaries, you cannot long remain tributaries of an adulterated sensibility which, in spite of yourselves, on the artistic level places you in the same camp as your enemies, the apostles of social conservatism. In this they are scarcely

mistaken: they have long recognised the revolutionary danger that modern art represents and are busy conjuring it away in two ways: some by endlessly welcoming it sarcastically over the past 30 years; others, more astutely, by giving special assistance to certain artists who ask only to be corrupted (so ceasing to be artists and becoming businessmen), and thereby boasting unchallenged about their 'advanced' ideas in matters of art. This only adds to the reigning intellectual confusion.

Art must express latent content – in other words what is secret and ineffable within each of us. In a certain sense it is the propagator of a strange beauty which, within humanity, has been able until now to escape the attacks of those who intend to have done with humanity. To want to force it to express manifest content can only expose it to these attacks; art would then lose its eternal quality, which is by its very nature to challenge all forms of oppression.

We have frequently explained ourselves with the greatest precision on these problems and when you declare that it is for the surrealists to reply to the questions of militants concerning surrealism, we are aware that each of our notes aims to give our position on a particular point and that these together, as well as the selection of quotes by several of us collected in *Le Libertaire* of 16.11.51 under the title 'What the surrealists want, what they think', should give the militants of the Anarchist Federation a precise idea of surrealism today.

Besides, we have always recommended that our comrades become acquainted with the great poetic works without which no understanding of our movement is possible (see the note of 11.1.52: 'Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Jarry, who all our young libertarian comrades should know as they should all know Sade, Lautréamont and the Schwob of *Le Livre de Monelle*').

Anarchism, you further write, has gone beyond the stage of revolt and struggles for a total revolution. Our attitude on this point has never varied and recently we reiterated it again in detail in the pamphlet *Révolution sur mesure*. In brief it is clear that for us the stage of revolt must be surpassed; we have always considered both the Anarchist Federation and surrealism as revolutionary movements and not just as individual poles of revolt. But we affirm that the revolutionary must always be a rebel under pain of becoming a bureaucrat. This is why placing the accent on total revolt in no way prejudges an outcome ascribed to the idea of revolution, but only bears witness to a concern to maintain a living fire within us which safeguards us from any submission to an ideal which, as magnificent as it may be, would be certain, without revolt, sooner or later to turn itself into a dogma.

When on the other hand we make use of the expression 'specialised elements', it is to be understood in the weak sense of the term, to the extent that one can say of surrealism that its province lies in the realm of perceptions rather than the social realm, but without prejudice to the fact that it

stakes its place within the social struggle, otherwise why would we pursue a collaboration with you, comrades? In the same way, if anarchism is a whole, it is undoubtedly on the socioeconomic level that its intervention is primarily placed. Here again, the two movements are complementary.

Neither do we hope to have finished with this debate. Nevertheless, we think we have shown that a common revolutionary will must, according to a criterion of effectiveness which thereby corroborates the moral criterion, be expressed differently according to whether one is situated on the social and political level or on the perceptive and poetic level.

Fraternally

Jean-Louis Bédouin, André Breton, Adrien Dax, Georges Goldfayn, Gérard Legrand, Benjamin Péret, José Pierre, Jean Schuster, François Valorbe.
October 1952

The invasion of Hungary by Soviet forces in 1956 once more initiated a moral crisis within international communism among people of good faith who clung to the hope that the Soviet Union could still lead the world to communism. For the surrealists, it was merely a further betrayal by a regime that had long passed beyond the pale of moral acceptability, and this declaration represented a further opportunity for the surrealists explicitly to reaffirm their position.

HUNGARY, RISING SUN

The world press mobilises its experts to draw political conclusions about recent events and comment on the administrative solution by which the UN will not fail to sanction the defeat of the Hungarian people. As far as we are concerned, it is our duty to proclaim that Thermidor (June 1848, May 1871; August 1936, January 1937 and March 1938 in Moscow; April 1939 in Spain and November 1956 in Budapest) flows into the same river of blood which, without possible ambiguity, divides the world into masters and slaves. The supreme ruse of the modern age is that today's assassins have assimilated the rhythm of history, and henceforth police death functions, in Algeria as in Hungary, in the name of democracy and socialism.

Exactly 39 years ago, Franco-British imperialism¹² tried to substantiate its prejudiced version of the Bolshevik revolution by making Lenin an agent of the Kaiser; the same argument is today used by Lenin's self-proclaimed disciples against the Hungarian insurgents who are mingled together with those fascist elements which inevitably infiltrated them. But during insurrections moral judgements are pragmatic:

THE FASCISTS ARE THOSE WHO FIRE ON THE PEOPLE.

No ideology can be maintained against this infamy: This is the return of Gallifet¹³ himself, with neither scruples nor shame, in a tank with a red star.

Alone among leading world 'communists', Maurice Thorez and his gang cynically pursue their careers as nancy boys of a secret police whose skin has been certainly thick enough to survive Stalin's decaying carcass.

The defeat of the Hungarian people is that of the world proletariat. Whatever nationalist turn the Polish resistance and the Hungarian Revolution might take, this is just its circumstantial aspect, determined above all by the colossal and deranged coercion of the ultra-nationalist state that Russia has become. The internationalist principle of proletarian revolution is not in doubt. The working class was bled white, *in its totality*, in 1871, by the French Versaillais. The Budapest youth, confronting Moscow's Versaillais – beyond any hope of revolt against Stalinist repression – has shed blood which cannot fail to define its course in the direction of *the transformation of the world*.

Anne Bédouin, Robert Benayoun, André Breton, Adrien Dax, Yves Elléouët, Charles Flammand, Georges Goldfayn, Louis Janover, Jean-Jacques Lebel, Gérard Legrand, Nora Mitrani, Benjamin Péret, José Pierre, André Pieyre de Mandiargues, Jacques Sautès, Jean Schuster, Jacques Sélénier, Jean-Claude Silbermann.

November 1956

The Cuban Revolution at first elicited the surrealists' complete support, culminating in the Cultural Congress in Havana in 1967 which many members of the French group enthusiastically attended, along with several former surrealists (Michel Leiris, Georges Limbour, Aimé Césaire, Pierre Naville and others). Disillusion set in during 1968, following the Cuban government's refusal to condemn the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. The following typical statement of support comes from La Brèche, Action surréaliste, no. 7 (December 1964).

THE EXAMPLE OF CUBA AND THE REVOLUTION: A MESSAGE FROM THE SURREALISTS TO CUBAN WRITERS AND ARTISTS

In 1964 surrealism is less inclined than ever to look back on its past and admire the importance of its attainments and the enlargement of its audience.

To transform the world is a primordial task: nothing can be gained if the economic structures on which traditional values are founded, their emanation and their safeguard, remain. Nevertheless to admit – even temporarily – only this single point of application for the struggle is a return to the instigation of a pernicious conformism, leading only to an elementary satisfaction, and which assumes the existence of a hierarchy of needs, and

consequently of a definition of mankind, of its powers and desires, which proceeds inevitably from notions passively inherited from centuries of servitude.

As it reaches us, culture, including the contribution that the twentieth century has made to it, is only a quantitative accumulation, aiming at best at a refining of sensation in an immutable framework in which people remain alienated. It is inadmissible that a heritage limited to the inventory of the complacency assumed by mankind to gild its chains should be unreservedly accepted. The dusty monuments which mark out the history of expression matter less to us than isolated cries uttered at long intervals over the centuries, like those of Sade or Lautréamont, flames fused into swords, dazzling visions of the great dispersed society, starting point for a *complete recasting of the sensibility*.

The politico-economic order which, from the West, governed the world, has not only conditioned social relations founded on the exploitation of man, but has engendered a mental structure able to assimilate, to the advantage of that order, everything that might be opposed to it, and to long veil what was once irreducible.

Today, perhaps in a more exemplary and lucid way than ever before, surrealism struggles precisely to lead the victories already attained to their ultimate revolutionary consequences.

Surrealism does not try to define what the people to come will be, nor to portray the landscape of a future paradise. What it wants is for tomorrow's people to be different from our alienated contemporaries. To achieve this, it considers it indispensable to proceed to the critical analysis of the current forms of society and, through opposing them, to provoke the violent inrush of everything within the individual that, through having been for too long obedient to repression, remains today in a state of virtuality. Was this not the ideal and the aim of Marx and Freud?

A true revolution must transform mankind in its social and individual totality. It is not enough to destroy capitalist economic structures and install in power another class which exercises its domination according to precepts inherited from the old society: the sanctity of work, love sacrificed to the reproduction of the species, cults of personality, the bureaucratisation of the artist who is reduced to the role of a propagandist, and so on.

An authentic revolution has nothing to fear from the free exercise of thought, nor from an artistic activity that excludes all sectarianism. *A Revolution which defends freedom of creation can be a revolution without a Thermidor.*

In the Cuban Revolution, in the admirable insurrection of the Sierra Maestra, in the struggle of the Cuban people for their liberty and in the opposition of Cuban intellectuals and artists to all dogmatism, surrealism pays its respects to a fraternal movement.

As it too, as far as its strength and circumstances allow, works towards the liquidation of the ideological and moral values of capitalism, aiming at a radical restructuring of understanding and sensibility, surrealism declares its solidarity with the Cuban artists and revolutionaries who struggle for the same objective in a far more violent and dangerous context.

SURREALISM HAS ALWAYS WANTED IN ITS OWN DOMAIN TO CATALYSE REVOLT, AND THIS ASPIRATION COINCIDES WITH WHAT, IN THE POLITICAL REALM, THE CUBAN EXAMPLE REPRESENTS. IT ASPIRES TO BECOME THE CONDUCTOR-WIRE BETWEEN MOMENTS OF THE REVOLUTION AND TO ALLOW THEIR SURPASSING THROUGH AN UNAMBIGUOUS DETERMINATION OF THEIR SITUATION WITHIN A PROCESS, AT THE SAME TIME AS BY REFERENCE TO THE SOLE FACTOR OF PROGRESS: THE IMPLICATION OF THE ALL-POWERFUL QUALITY OF DESIRE.

LOVE AND POETRY, THE THRESHOLD OF A FINALLY INHABITABLE HOUSE.

Summer 1964

French surrealists' negative responses to attempts by Trotskyists to reconstitute FIARI showed the Surrealist Group – by now a veteran of four decades of political action – unwilling to draw hasty parallels between the political situations of the mid-thirties and mid-sixties, and the group's recognition of how scandal itself had become a marketable commodity seems remarkably prescient about the fate of contemporary art today. The two tracts reproduced here were responses to the 'Rupture' group and to Michel Lequenne (a representative of the French Section of the Fourth International) respectively.

NEITHER TODAY NOR IN THIS WAY

Organisations and groups that in general rely on Trotskyist thought have in the course of the last few months proposed the reconstruction of a FIARI and have asked our views about it. The multiplication of such initiatives has led us to make a clear statement.

Do we need to be reminded about 1933–38? Everyone then saw the acceleration of successive catastrophes right in front of them. In five years of history, Nazism took power in Berlin, Franco in Madrid, the old Bolshevik guard was liquidated in Moscow. What more leaden light has ever fallen in such a short time on the very idea of mankind? Has it even completely recovered today? Not only did the extraordinary events render any immediate revolutionary hope doubtful or chimerical, but everyone knew that war was inevitable. Artists and writers who had been forced to flee their country of origin formed a clear example of the insurmountable

offence done to the cause of freedom. The constitutive manifesto of FIARI declared that this cause is that of every revolutionary artist. Such a viewpoint, on which surrealism had always founded its actions and hopes, made it possible in 1938, when the very fate of civilisation was at stake, to accomplish without delay the urgent tasks to which the two issues of *Clé* prior to September 1939 were devoted: to denounce the slave system in artistic matters and to demand the independence of art.

Since then, above all, there was the war; and the fire really had to hide beneath the ashes. Today, how can one fail to recognise the upheaval that has taken place? Nazism is dead. The balance of terror assures us peaceful coexistence. The great empires have settled down. It is understood that wars will now only take place within carefully defined sporting arenas. As hateful as this bias may be, it is no less the political rule in 1966. It can be conceded that the ruling classes in both East and West have given proof of realism and moderation. In the same way, those who progressively re-established their own particular profit margins, or those who ameliorated the fate of the disinherited, have demonstrated the practical success of reformism. The colonised people themselves, with the blood which stains the flags of rebels, the only ones we can salute, have bought the right to sign their own names and to lead something better than a 'nigger's' existence; revolutionary morality will not cease to denounce the worsened existence to which their new masters force them to submit in some cases, but at least it is no longer a matter of major crimes against the spirit, racism or xenophobia.

As for the conditions of artistic creation and expression, how can one say they have deteriorated? Quite the opposite; even from the East, where they remain seriously threatened, numerous documents come to us showing that, in spite of two recent trials, during the past ten years power has been constrained (not without at times a sudden brutal resumption of possession) to surrender a terrain which seems to slip away under its feet. What about casting a glance over the countries governed by capitalism? Nothing there is true, everything is permitted. Scandal and subversion are quoted on the Stock Exchange. Far from being personally in danger or condemned to silence, artists are invited to make oppositional work by the financial powers themselves. Pressed to play the role that once fell to the court jester, the artist knows that his consent is worth every indulgence and all the solicitude of power. What is more, no risk is being run by those who refuse to eat from this bowl.

In an earlier time FIARI (brought together in a combat programme which was also a negative programme) could find, in the struggle it led against the most bloody tyrannies of all time, the means for positive action: the independence of art, a subversive idea at the time; a revolutionary idea, which conferred upon its supporters a kind of moral authority. This is not the place to interpret the art of the forties. But a federation of revolution-

ary artists, today deprived of the objectives of great scope that FIARI aimed at, could do no better than what is being achieved without it, for example when it comes to denouncing the after-effects of Stalinism. In Paris, it is the delegates of Moscow itself, at the recent PCF congress, who extol intellectual audacity and independence.

It has to be said that, apart from those exceptions to which we will always be found ready to react, the independence of art is largely accomplished. The independence of the artist, which now hardly comes from anything but art criticism, is a matter of personal conduct. It clearly measures the revolutionary will of each individual. For us, what moves us, is less the idea of a revolution we would strongly risk not seeing than the justification of our own existence in our actions. In this case, as [Adrien] Dax wrote in *La Brèche*, 'a Union of Revolutionary Artists of all tendencies always remains desirable'. But if 'for the essential aspect of their spirit, its objectives might not differ from those of FIARI', we would be wary of adding to the present confusion by making the struggle against artistic control a programme of regroupment. Even to affirm the artist's freedom of expression in political matters has no validity. Intellectual fetishism will never mark a step on the road to Revolution. The aims of revolutionaries, like their means, must be defined in relation to a disastrous situation maintained by the con men of reformism. Today freedom has less need of defenders than of inventors.

For the Surrealist Movement: Philippe Audoin, Vincent Bounoure, André Breton, Gérard Legrand, José Pierre, Jean Schuster.

Paris, 19 April 1966

THE SURREALISTS TO THE FRENCH SECTION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

It is entirely legitimate that revolutionary thought analyses the past to which it is indebted for its claims to glory, its themes of exaltation and its methods of action. But there would be a sort of revolutionary attachment to the past in overestimating the old endeavours to the point of seeing in their forms instruments that are universally applicable in all circumstances. Our response concerning the reconstitution today, root and branch, of a FIARI aims to denounce its implications of intellectual laziness, fetishism and complete ineffectiveness, trying rather to define together with those who have proposed it a programme of revolutionary action from the analysis of actual facts.

[...] We support a re-examination of the use value of a vocabulary dating back to 1848. We are against revisionism, but it seems to us that, when it comes to it, it has no more certain source than intellectual oversimplification and that it is not possible to speak about the proletariat in Paris in the same terms as in 1871 or 1934. To judge from the goodwill with which we see it take the bait of the consumer economy, our reasons for living would

all be finished if surrealism had not declared the transformation of the sensibility as urgent as the betterment of human life. To the extent that reformism has converted part of the proletariat to bourgeois options, we believe it is more necessary than ever to denounce them, whatever convenience a great number of individuals might find in them, as traps and new forms of alienation. This reason alone is enough: it is necessary to have done with the scholastic element of a vocabulary which is unable to submit to current political realities, and finally to consider Marxism, not as a doctrine, but as a method for action.

For our part, we have, in surrealism, no doctrine at our disposal. We could not even speak of a surrealist method which in truth can be nothing but our life as we want it to be, in thought and action. We need, rather than taking pride from localised successes, to become aware, each day, of the deficit in which our hopes leave us. We have to make up for an overwhelming passivity. Reaction is in power everywhere. In a great number of counties, including our own, it speculates on the advantages it can take from a liberal façade which reconciles some people on the left to it, shuffles the electoral cards and from the outside credits it with the prestige of a tolerant centrism. As a necessary complement, this political demagoguery has a cultural politics that is all the more open in that it concerns only conspicuous superstructures. Thus Malraux subsidises the production of *Les Paravents* and hints that he deplores the banning of *La Religieuse*. If reaction finds it useful today to grant what we believed we could one day (along with our comrades) tear from it, it would be dangerously misleading for us to refuse to acknowledge it. The life we lead is not often the one we would like to have. But we do not believe in the virtue of errors any more than in the perennality of contemporary political and intellectual conditions. The current limits of human investigation, the innumerable alienations which certainly govern us, the electoral victories by reformists are facts upon which the centrist ideology generally congratulates itself. Are they going to discourage us to the point that we would forget to take account of it in our calculations? We believe the situation is disastrous. We expect everything, we expect nothing except from the focusing of programmes founded upon the real. It is a matter of uncovering the only true needs currently able to exalt the public spirit. In the absence of this intellectual trajectory, no regrouping is possible except in a circumstantial and provisional way.

Such would inevitably be the case for a federation which limited itself to taking an analysis of the Vietnam War as its platform: an initiative that would come after all far too late and which would be juxtaposed with others, its scope would be of the most limited kind. Should it wish to assign itself more ambitious objectives, it would come up against the constitutional difficulties we have already stressed. If it were able to overcome this

step, no federation would survive the dissensions which would not fail to be created within it by those who have no other profession than to give their comrades lessons in rigour and morality. We both have better things to do than offer them an audience.

The determination of the new stakes liable to constitute a revolutionary programme today are not within the bounds of a federation in which several tendencies would confront one another without advantage. It is in this sense that it is necessary, we believe, to maintain and to render more fruitful the exchanges of ideas that have taken place between surrealism and the inheritors of Trotskyist thought. Not only would they allow us to bring together our actions at the level of immediate actuality, but they could also give themselves the aim, not of a regrouping in which they would inevitably be diluted, but of the discussion of the above themes, without prejudice to the practical perspectives into which we could be led.

For the Surrealist Movement: Philippe Audoin, Vincent Bounoure, Gérard Legrand, José Pierre, Jean Schuster.

Paris, 20 November 1966

May 1968 was an extraordinary culmination of surrealist hopes (the events in Paris and major exhibitions in Prague and Brno) and the moment of their disillusionment. The surrealists in Paris welcomed the upheaval with an enthusiasm that was sometimes tinged with disquiet, expressed in the short tract No Pastors for this Fury issued at the onset of the events (5 May). In June they published a special issue of their journal, L'Archibras, combining anonymous and often incendiary statements to form a collective front. This issue was seized by the police and was under investigation for insulting the President, defamation of the police and incitement to crime (though the prosecution was eventually dropped following a presidential amnesty). Hastily assembled by Vincent Bounoure, Claude Courtot, Annie Le Brun, Gérard Legrand, José Pierre, Jean Schuster, Georges Sebbag and Jean-Claude Silbermann, and responding to events as they unfolded, some of the articles now appear circumstantial – fixed in the euphoria of their time. Nevertheless, the three which follow (the last an untitled note evoking Rimbaud's 'I is another') give their flavour. Indeed, Portrait of the Enemy, intended to define the foe, today reads more as a terrifyingly prescient inventory of the forces that would soon become dominant and repress the last vestiges of the reflex towards the transformation of the world that surrealism demanded.

PORTRAIT OF THE ENEMY

(Jumbled together, general view, close-ups, from a distance, up close, face on, in 3/4 view, in profile, back view, lying down, sitting, kneeling, still, moving, external, internal.)

Realism is the occupation of the whole of reality by police reality alone.

General de Gaulle, President of the French Republic: a bourgeois, militarist, presidential, anti-republican and French realist. Supreme realist head of the real police, realist organiser of real repression; realist protector of threatened capitalism, through the participatory project that divides profit into two parts: a real one for capitalism, a fictional one for the workers.

The French Communist Party and its subsidiaries: a realist apparatus for repressing the communist call at its source. Realist informers on revolutionaries.

All the political parties, all the trades unions: realist institutions motivated by fear of the imagination which develops consciousness and by fear of the desire which changes reality.

Electoral realism which congeals the revolutionary urge and transforms the voice of the people into a parliamentary discourse.

The realism of the majority: the sub-reality of the alienated masses.

The realism of culture: dead ideas which are mingled with living ideas, under the flags of nations, in the framework of folklore and within the intellectual caste which diffuses them disdainfully through the mass media.

The realism of perception – of *déjà vu*.

The open or hidden but realist collaboration of classes.

The realism of the hunger which knows to wait upon the orders from the realists in charge. The reality of hunger which has no patience.

The realist will for realist reforms against the demands of revolution.

The realist tactic of recuperation.

The objective realism of information.

The realism of unity with perennial informers and traitors, with no regard for historical reality.

The realism of active stupidity attributing a passive and irremediable stupidity to the people and which from that moment must be cultivated, realistically. [...]

The realism of authority. Of the father, the head, the boss, the teacher, the priest.

The realism of hierarchy. Of the foreman, of the middle manager, of the apparatchik, of the non-commissioned officer.

The realism of commerce.

The realism of progress.

The realism of discipline.

The realism of apoliticism.

The realism of merit.

The realism of flunkeydom.

The realism of good citizenship.

Anything realist is senile. Everything senile is realist.

On 3 May 1968 realism was condemned to death. The objective of the revolution, intact today in its reality, is to send it before the firing squad.

8 June 1968

DOWN WITH FRANCE!

It is necessary to have done once and for all with those who sport decorations in their buttonholes. This country has been turned into a model sty; it is absolutely intolerable to live surrounded by pigs honoured with various titles: the old combatant pig, the sporty pig, the worker pig, the reproductive pig, the literary pig and so on. When one makes as if to want to clean their troughs, all these pigs cry out 'Long Live France!' and, faced with danger, form the sacred union of tricolour snouts.

In the street, in the metro, everywhere, let's systematically insult, never mind whether they are members of the Communist Party or Gaullists, all the lovers of insignia, the beribboned, the wearers of crosses, medals and other palimpeds, until they leave off with their sub-prefecture exploits, their eternal flames, their industrial tribunal heroism and their backroom morality. Until they might finally be ashamed of being inscribed on the roll of honour of a rotten society.

Let's continue to defile all monuments to the dead to turn them into monuments of ingratitude. (Let's admit that only a nation of pigs could have the idea of honouring the unknown soldier – a German deserter, let's hope – by placing his tomb under a grotesque triumphal arch which, with its four outstretched hoofs, looks like it's shitting on the poor sod who, on a day white with snow, was sent to spill his red blood for the thin blue line of Vosges.) We owe no one anything. Whoever today thinks they deserve respect really deserves a couple of slaps across the face. The time of insolence has finally arrived.

Down with our inheritance; above all, down with national heritage! Down with patriotic and patrimonial patrimony! If the tricolour flag is that of the French Revolution, it is also that of Louis Philippe I, king of the French, and of the sinister Mr Thiers, it is also the symbol of colonial France – for more than a century and a half the executioners of the Algerian people have not brandished any other emblem – it is especially the smokescreen of de Gaulle's fascism and, for this reason alone, deserves to be torn apart. We will not kill, in the name of History, in the name of a few pages of a revolutionary anthology, in the name of the *past* to recuperate the *present* standard of the paras and the CRS. The French flag is henceforth good only to serve as a shroud for the bourgeoisie which has known how to use it for its profit alone.

Let's have done with the dupery of national unity, with practices of reconciliation, with the dribble of reasonable and constructive arguments

which always turn to the advantage of those who listen to them *sitting down*: in presidential armchairs, on the benches of the National Assembly, on car seats or folding picnic stools on family weekends, on stadium terraces and in all the circuses where those who have bread rest their arses from their daily kicking.

No to participation, no to out-of-court settlements, no the electoral masquerade, no to the complicity of master and slave: we do not recognise a people of freed slaves, we want a people of free citizens.

The civil war is the only just war because one knows why one is killing one's enemy.

Frenchmen and women, we appeal to your ill will.

8 June 1968

April 1968 is long ago. The cut is clean and absolute. The only words from long ago which, killed today by a necessary formalism, secretly arm the revolution, are those which went into the desert.

I surrealism is another, a free captive of a torrent whose control – by itself or by anyone else – it prohibits.

Everything depends from now on the quantity of passion – the measure of everything and of which nothing has the measure – cast into the street. I Surrealism – dissolved in the anonymous revolution – producers of passion.

Surrealist groups continue to be active and to develop the theoretical positions which had come to a head in the events of 1968, a crisis point which, as this volume's introduction suggests, in many senses can now be seen to reflect an intellectual watershed of far wider implications than for surrealism alone. Here is a tract issued by the Swedish group in 1991, a cogent critique of the contemporary public sphere and the way in which it has today been able to appropriate life and reduce it to its own measure.

THE PUBLIC SPHERE AND CURIOSITY

The modern public domain has a double face. On the one hand there is its 'outer' aspect which, aside from acting as a propaganda organ for the established order and as a mediator between different aspects of bourgeois ideology, makes a more extensive claim to reflect reality as a whole. Its expansionist dynamic also leads it to 'shed light on', that is reinterpret, transform or even replace ever greater aspects of reality with its own image of it, so reducing it in accordance with the interests, standards and realities of the established order. This gives it its alienating though transcendent character: the public sphere tends to 'surpass' life, even to take its place or confiscate it.

Its other, 'inner' face is manifested by the increasingly significant (and economically favourable) reflection of its own realities – that is, its own

self-reflection, growing ever more narcissistic and cynically eclectic through the disastrous effects of the crisis and degeneration of bourgeois society.

A characteristic of the modern public sphere (developed from the way it muffles the opposition between the burden of the given and the demands of society on the one hand, and humanity's real needs and desires on the other, as well as between itself and actual reality), more or less sophisticated but comforting to its citizens, is its self-reproducing mendacity and manipulation of reality and life. In its formalisation and 'aestheticisation' of everything it touches, in its use of arbitrarily exchangeable but ready-made criteria, in the service of impressionistic, temporarily suitable forms, the public sphere (with culture in a central role) imprisons us as it builds partitions between us and life.

The resulting surplus alienation is then mobilised, made to participate, and is thereby reproduced – in contrast to the old bourgeois public sphere and that of the former so-called 'communist' countries – as a normal condition of and through the public sphere in an active if often unconscious (but also outspoken) way. The public domain comprises not only representative institutions and individuals, but also a process of 'socialisation'; a medium, a language that exists in itself with its own perverted and impoverished symbolism and logic, that builds upon and is effected as a substitute for the dissatisfaction, tension and deep conflicts encountered in our existence, stupefying this tension and mitigating its terrifying consequences by governing it through formalised and more comfortable attitudes, perspectives, behaviour and even body language. The language adapted for the market is omnipotent because it targets all the senses and is able to offer many different – even contradictory – answers to the frustrated needs of life. In this way, all originality and (relative) freedoms are expropriated, or at least neutralised by processes that eternally reproduce established structures. In the public sphere the actor and the spectator have become one.

Moreover, the public domain is defined by a trade in information, or rather by the maximising of information's effectiveness in the service of the ruling ideology and the needs of commerce. By its superfluity and fragmentation this contributes to a permanent raping of the senses and thus of thought. In the process sociality becomes exchange value (while personal interchangeability becomes a virtue); the use values of communication and creativity are alienated for the public sphere's profit and market demands.

The public sphere is also the expression and the utopia of the established, disguised as an image of reality in the present time, where different myths take shape, and are confirmed as exceptions by which everyone can hope to fill the chasms – of alienation and also of life – contained within them. These are myths of a new kind because the public sphere is represented by material (and thus tangible) 'gods', who help to maintain the illusion that

they share our world as well as that of the eternity of 'fame'. Their function is the same as existing myths, though their impact is more intensive, if temporary, reflecting a greater formal variety and speed. This multifaceted or fragmented 'utopia' consists of different kinds of experiences (success, wealth, happiness, love and so on) with a constantly actualised character of consumption offering recurrent possibilities to all those excluded from them. The utopia of the public domain is a treadmill whose crest appears to be life, but whose base is death.

At the other end of the scale, the rebellion of today's youth (having its origin as a specific phenomenon in fifties' US society) is now integrated into the public sphere, and youth tends to disappear as a separate social subject. After an effective disciplining of childhood and a rapid expropriation of the sexuality of puberty, people remain in a permanent puberty – a pseudo-puberty – that represents a frozen rebellion to parallel an equally frozen sense of responsibility, states which can very well coexist within the same social group and often within the same individual. Aggression and sexuality are repressed in this form to non-productivity (in the sense that all production of material and spiritual values reproduces the market itself), so stimulating the circulation of blood at the heart of bourgeois ideology against collapse from within. The public domain represents a total de-erotisation by means of pseudo-eroticising everything.

The public domain's acceptance of the unreachable *Öffentlichkeit* as the image of 'eternal life' generates an implicit acceptance of something that, superficially considered, looks like death, but is really alienated non-activity, a permanent distraction of the senses that reproduces alienated thinking or perception (naturally with equally 'constructive' expressions), a desublimation which does not create but accepts and reproduces. A civilised adulthood comes to be a matter of a clever but spiritually diffuse flexibility in responding to the flow of given impressions and behaviour. An initiation into death, which is the condition and necessary contrast to life, would quicken the forces of life and thereby be a source of knowledge and an erotic reservoir, the gravity of which the death-oriented public sphere would be unable to expropriate. The *Öffentlichkeit* is an opium for the masses.

Even the unconscious becomes increasingly public. And in the public domain there is above all no night; its stage lights shine ever further, blinding out anything that might shine with its own light, fed by ever greater doses of repressive desublimation as it unceasingly struggles to break the silence and drown out the anguished and desperate – but also enigmatic and marvellous – questions raised by life. The public sphere is supported by and promotes a basically voyeuristic, short-circuited and impotent curiosity that may be temporarily exciting but in the end is frustrated and risk-free.

It is in 'worthless' areas, in the abyss and in the night, that the other curiosity (one driven by an insatiable thirst for what reality has always promised) is to be found. It is here that the surrealist presence grows.

The Surrealist Movement's Group in Stockholm:

Aase Berg, Kajsa Bergh, Johannes Bergmark, Carl-Michael Edenborg, Bruno Jacobs, Jonas Lundkvist, Petra Mandal, H. Christian Werner, Tomas Werner.

1991

3 THE SECURITY OF THE SPIRIT

One of the earliest manifestations of surrealism may be said to be the trial, in 1921, of Maurice Barrès, accused of ‘crimes against the security of the spirit’. Barrès (1862–1923) was a symbolist writer close to anarchism in his youth who had become a reactionary nationalist by the time of the First World War. This Dada event was an actual trial, held in public, with Breton as judge, Ribemont-Dessaignes as prosecuting counsel and Aragon and Soupault as defence counsel and witnesses. Barrès, found guilty, was sentenced to 20 years’ hard labour. The event, however, was significant for signalling the demise of Dada and the birth of surrealism, clearly demarcating what separated the two movements: where Dada had scorned everything, and especially morality of any kind, surrealism would take shape as a re-figuration of morality. Its negation of Dada is to be found in the importance it gave to reformulating morality in terms of a ‘new declaration of the rights of humanity’ as announced by the first issue of *La Révolution surréaliste*. This concern was to be apparent in the letters the surrealists fired off to the Pope, the Dalai Lama and others, in calling for the prisons to be emptied and the army to be disbanded, or in celebrating hysteria; other texts celebrated acts of exemplary social refusal, such as the events in *The Heart’s Hue and Cry*.

Above all, however, surrealist tracts and declarations offered a forum in which to chart both the intellectual landscape of surrealist preferences (lists of cultural and historical figures like *Read... Don’t Read or See... Don’t See*, inventories that had a character not merely of an ideal library or film programme but of moral imperative) or to bring attention to ignoble behaviour on the part of poets, artists and intellectuals. Perpetually wary of the perennial accusation that surrealism constituted a purely cultural (not to say ‘avant-garde’) clique rather than an intellectual or political current, collective texts repeatedly underlined the assertion that art and literature themselves entailed a fundamentally ethical and social responsibility (albeit one that could never be reduced to ‘useful’ ends, of which socialist realism provides only the most obvious example). More immediately for surrealist groups, such statements were also the means by which the collectivity took stock of – and action over – individuals within or close to the movement whose positions were perceived as intolerable. Exclusions from the group

were often made on the grounds of moral attitude rather than political divergence (Breton himself later suggested that the waves of exclusions and defections from the pre-war French group were in actuality disagreements not about personal politics but about *love*), and the texts in this section illuminate the ways in which the Surrealist Movement developed as an intense ethical community.

The famous series of statements Letter to the Head Doctors of Insane Asylums, Address to the Dalai Lama and Address to the Pope published in La Révolution surréaliste no. 3 was the idea of Antonin Artaud, who seems to have played the major role in writing them, although Robert Desnos, Michel Leiris and Théodore Fraenkel may also have participated in their drafting. While their scope and dramatic tone is particular to a specific period of surrealism's early history, one strongly marked by Artaud's interests, they are also interesting in confirming surrealism's explicit ethical ambitions far beyond the essentially 'literary' notoriety that underlay so many of the avant-garde's aspirations in Paris during this era – including those of Parisian Dada.

LETTER TO THE HEAD DOCTORS OF INSANE ASYLUMS

Sirs,

Laws and customs have given you the right to examine the mind. Your understanding enables you to exercise this sovereign and formidable jurisdiction. What a laugh! The credulity of civilised people, experts and rulers endow psychiatry with who knows what supernatural insights. The validity of your profession has already been decided. We do not intend here to discuss the value of your science, nor the dubious existence of mental illness. But for every hundred alleged cases of pathogenesis in which the confusion of matter and mind is set loose, for every hundred classifications of which only the most tenuous can still be used, how many honourable attempts have been made to approach the cerebral world where so many of your prisoners are living? How many of you, for example, believe that the dreams of a dementia praecox patient, the images to which he is in prey, are something other than a hotchpotch of words?

We are not surprised to find you unsuitable for a task for which few are predestined. But we object to your being given the right, however limited, to sanction by perpetual incarceration your investigations into the realm of the mind.

And what an incarceration! We know – though it is not known widely enough – that asylums, far from being an *asylum* are frightful jails, where detainees provide a free and convenient work force in which ill-treatment is the rule, and you tolerate this. The asylum for the mentally ill, under

cover of science and justice, is comparable to a barracks, a prison or a penal colony.

We will not raise here the issue of arbitrary internments, to spare you the trouble of easy denials. We affirm that a great number of your inmates, quite insane according to official definition, are also arbitrarily interned. We do not accept that the free development of a delirium should be shackled, since it is as legitimate and logical as any other succession of human ideas and actions. The repression of anti-social reactions is as chimerical as it is unacceptable in its principle. All individual actions are anti-social. The insane are the individual victims par excellence of social dictatorship. In the name of this characteristic individuality of mankind, we demand the release of these slaves of the sensibility, since it is equally not in the power of the law to shut away everyone who thinks and acts.

Quite apart from stressing the perfectly inspired nature of the expressions of certain madmen, to the extent that we are able to appreciate them, we affirm the absolute legitimacy of their conception of reality, and of any action resulting from it.

Remember this tomorrow on your morning rounds, when you try, even though you lack the knowledge, to converse with these people over whom, let us be clear, your only advantage is that of force.

April 1925

ADDRESS TO THE DALAI LAMA

Great Lama, we are your most faithful servants, give us, send us your insight, in a language that our contaminated European spirits might understand, and if needs be change our Spirit, make of us a Spirit turned towards those perfect peaks where Man's Spirit suffers no more.

Make us a Spirit without habits, a Spirit truly frozen in the Spirit, or a Spirit with purer habits, your habits, if they will equip us for freedom.

We are surrounded by wizened popes, literary men, critics, dogs, our Spirit is among dogs, whose thoughts go straight to the ground, who think incorrigibly in the present.

Teach us, Lama, the material levitation of the body, and how the earth can no longer have a hold over us.

For you know which transparent liberation of the soul, which freedom of the Spirit within the Spirit, oh worthy Pope, Pope of the true Spirit, we refer to.

It is with my inner eye that I behold you, Pope, from the summit of my inner being. It is from within that I resemble you, I, propelled out, idea, lip, levitation, dream, cry, renunciation of thought, hung between every form, hoping for nothing now but the wind.

April 1925

ADDRESS TO THE POPE

The Confessional is not you, Pope, it is us; but you should understand us, and so should the Catholic world.

In the name of the Fatherland, in the name of the Family, you urge the sale of souls, the endless grinding down of the body.

Between our souls and ourselves we've enough paths to cross, too much ground to cover for the intervention of your doddering priests and for that heap of speculative doctrines that feed the eunuchs of world liberalism.

Your Catholic and Christian God who, like all gods, has thought up all evil:

1. He's in your pocket.
2. We couldn't care less about your canons, your index, your sin, confession and band of priests, we've got another war in mind, war against you, Pope, cur.

Here the spirit confesses to the spirit.

What wins out in your Roman masquerade from start to finish is hatred of the soul's immediate truths, of those flames that burn straight from the spirit. No God, Bible or Gospel, no words can stop the spirit.

We are not of the world. You Pope, cloistered in the world, neither earth nor God speak through you.

The world is the abyss of the soul. Crooked Pope, outside the soul, let us bathe in our own bodies, leave our souls in our souls, we don't need your sword of truth.

April 1925

This famous statement, also from issue 3 of La Révolution surréaliste, showed that French surrealists also possessed sufficient confidence to risk unambiguously direct challenges on more political and social issues. The parallel between prisons and the army – and by implication between armed force and 'crime' – concerned the fundamental issue for surrealism of liberty, and the text is characteristic of early surrealist provocations.

OPEN THE PRISONS / DISBAND THE ARMY

NO SUCH THING AS A COMMON LAW CRIME

Social constraint has had its day. Nothing, not the admission of wrongdoing nor a contribution to national defence, should force people to abrogate their liberty. The idea of prison or the barracks are common coinage today: these outrages no longer surprise you. Its indignity lies in the passive acceptance of those who get around the problem by an assortment of moral and physical abdications (honesty, illness or patriotism).

Once conscience has recovered from the abuses made up on the one hand by such dungeons and on the other by the degradation and belittling they bring about in those who seek refuge in them as in those locked up in them – *and it seems there are those insane enough to prefer the cell or the barrack room to suicide* – with this conscience salved at last, no further discussion or recantation is possible. The opportunity to have done with it all has never been so great, so don't talk to us about opportunity. Let the assassins get on with it; if you want peace prepare for war; such statements only relate to the most basic fears or hypocritical desires. We are not afraid to proclaim that we expect, we demand, the catastrophe. The real catastrophe would be the continuation of a world in which one man has rights over others. How can appeals still be made to the fallacious argument of sacred union in the face of knives or machine guns? Send the soldiers and convicts back to the fields. And your freedom? There is no freedom for the enemies of freedom. We won't be gaolers' accomplices.

Parliament votes to limit amnesties; next spring's class will soon graduate; in England an entire city was powerless to save a man; no one was surprised to learn that several American prisoners had their executions suspended until after Christmas *because they had fine voices*. And now they've sung, they can die for the exercise. The dying await in the sentry boxes and in electric chairs; will you let them be put out of their misery?

OPEN THE PRISONS DISBAND THE ARMY

April 1925

Psychoanalysis was of course central to surrealists' concerns, and in particular the phenomenon of hysteria fascinated them. Hysteria must have appeared such a notable landmark in the topography of psychoanalysis for surrealism not only for its gendered nature (providing not an explanation for but an incitement to female insubordination) and its visual suggestion (revealed in the striking images of hysterics that originally accompanied this text) but also for its elusive nature in the history of psychoanalysis itself. In celebrating its 'fiftieth' anniversary in issue 11 of La Révolution surréaliste, Aragon and Breton put forward the audacious idea that it was not a mental illness but a poetic means of expression, something fully in accord with their view that poetry was to be 'made by all'.

THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF HYSTERIA

We surrealists wish to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of hysteria, the greatest poetic discovery of the late nineteenth century, and we do so just as the dismantling of the concept of hysteria seems accepted. We who love no one more than these young hysterics, whose perfect example is provided by observations relating to the wonderful X.L. (Augustine), admitted to Dr

Charcot's ward at the Salpêtrière hospital on 21 October 1875, aged fifteen and a half, how could we not be affected by the laborious refutation of the organic disturbances reduced, in mere doctors' eyes, to processes of hysteria? A crying shame! In 1913 Dr Babinski, the most intelligent man ever to have addressed this question, ventured to publish this: 'When an emotion is sincere, deep, when it shakes the human soul, no place is left for hysteria.' What better has been offered us as learning? Does Freud, who owes so much to Charcot, remember the days when, according to testimony from those still alive, the Salpêtrière house doctors would confuse their professional duties and their propensity for love when, come nightfall, the patients would either meet them outside or welcome them into their beds? They would then patiently outline, for the benefit of an entirely unapologetic medical cause, the so-called pathological positions of passion that were, and for us still are, so humanly precious. After 50 years, is the school of Nancy dead? If not, has Doctor Luys forgotten? But where are Néri's observations of the Messina earthquake? Where are the Algerian soldiers torpedoed by that Raymond Roussel of science, Clovis Vincent?

It is too easy to set up that 'complex and proteiform illness called hysteria that escapes all definition' (Bernheim) in opposition to the various definitions of hysteria that have been offered to the present day: whether divine in antiquity, infernal in the Middle Ages, from the possessed of Loudon to the flagellants of Notre-Dame des Pleurs (Long live Madame Chantelouve!), mystic, erotic or plain lyrical definitions, social definitions or expert ones. Those who saw the beautiful film *Witchcraft Through the Ages* will certainly recall having found, on screen or in the auditorium, information more pertinent than that in the books of Hippocrates, or Plato (where the uterus bucks like a little goat), or of Galen (who immobilises the goat), or Fernel (who sets it off again in the sixteenth century and could feel it rising to the stomach beneath his hand). They all saw the horns of the Beast get bigger and bigger until they were those of the devil. In turn the devil was not enough. Positivist hypotheses divided this heritage. The crisis of hysteria took shape at the expense of hysteria itself, with its superb aura and its four stages, the third of which captivates us like the purest, most expressive *tableaux vivants*, its perfectly simple resolution in normal life. Classical hysteria loses its characteristics by 1906: 'Hysteria is a pathological state manifested by disturbances that can, in certain cases, be reproduced by suggestion, perfect in every detail and capable of being removed again under the influence of persuasion (counter-suggestion) alone' (Babinski).

In this definition we see simply a moment in hysteria's development. The dialectical movement giving rise to it follows its own course. Ten years later, in the deplorable guise of pithiatism, hysteria began to reclaim its due.

Doctors were astonished. They wanted to deny what they could not lay claim to.

Thus in 1928 we propose this new definition of hysteria:

Hysteria is a more or less irreducible mental state characterised by the subversion of the relations set up between the subject and the moral world from which it believes itself to have sprung in practice, beyond any delirious system. This mental state is founded on the need for a reciprocal seduction, which explains the hastily accepted miracles of medical suggestion or counter-suggestion. Hysteria is not a pathological phenomenon and can in every sense be considered a supreme means of expression.

Aragon, Breton.

15 March 1928

Game playing, as is well known, has always been an important aspect of surrealist activity, and questioning which writers or artists were regarded as appropriate to the surrealist tradition was a constant concern. The following famous injunction from 1931, on the basis of a dialectical inclusion and exclusion, defines surrealist interests at the time. Give or take a few additions or subtractions, it still provides a good marker for continuing surrealist attractions and anathemas (see table overleaf).

1931

*The 'Aragon Affair' was perhaps the most traumatic of the splits within surrealism, certainly for Breton himself. Considered Breton's closest ally, Aragon became seduced by Stalinism, apparently during a trip taken in 1930 to the Soviet Union. Having been threatened with prosecution for his inflammatory poem 'Red Front', the surrealists rallied to his defence; the complex issues this text raises about the role of poetry have still to be examined in the detail they deserve. Breton developed the argument in his pamphlet *Misère de la poésie* (also defending Aragon, though not without serious reservations about the turn of his poem), and the Belgian surrealists also responded with the tract *Poetry Transfigured*, which challenges some of the arguments put forward by the French; but Aragon himself in fact used this debate as his opportunity to break with the group altogether in favour of Stalinism.*

THE ARAGON AFFAIR

Only in the past few days did we realise that the poetic phrase, submitted as it is to its particular concrete determinants, by definition obeying as it does the laws of an exalted language, running its own risks in the domain of interpretation where consideration of its literal sense *does not in any way*

READ:	DON'T READ:	READ:	DON'T READ:
Heraclitus	Plato	Lautréamont	Kraft-Ebbing
	Virgil		Taine
Lulle	Thomas Aquinas	Rimbaud	Verlaine
Flamel		Nouveau	Laforge
Agrippa	Rabelais	Huysmans	Daudet
Scève	Ronsard	Caze	
	Montaigne	Jarry	Gourmont
Swift	Molière	Becque	Verne
Berkeley		Allais	Courteline
	La Fontaine	Th. Flournoy	Mme de Noailles
La Mettrie		Hamsun	Philippe
Young		Freud	Bergson
Rousseau	Voltaire	Lafargue	Jaurès
Diderot		Durkheim	
d'Holbach			Lévy-Bruhl
Kant	Schiller	Lenin	Sorel
Sade	Mirabeau	Synge	Claudel
Laclos		Apollinaire	Mistral
Marat	Bern. de Saint Pierre	Roussel	Péguy
Babeuf	Chénier	Léautaud	Proust
Fichte	Mme de Staël	Cravan	d'Annunzio
Hegel		Picabia	Rostand
Lewis		Reverdy	Jacob
Arnim	Hoffmann	Vaché	Valéry
Maturin		Mayakovsky	Barbusse
Rabbe	Schopenhauer	Chirico	Mauriac
A. Bertrand	Vigny	Savinio	Toulet
Nerval	Lamartine	Neuberg	Malraux
Borel	Balzac		Kipling
Feuerbach	Renan		Gandhi
Marx			Maurras
Engels	Comte		Duhamel
	Mérimée		Benda
	Fromentin		Valois
Baudelaire	Lecomte de Lisle		Vautel
Cros	Banville		Etc., etc., etc.

succeed in exhausting its meaning – we had not realised that the poetic phrase could be judged by its immediate content and if necessary be incriminated by the judiciary in the same way as any other considered form of expression. The proceedings taken against Baudelaire alone alert us to the ridicule to which legislation exposes itself and which would have, in its

impotence, called Rimbaud or Lautréamont to account for the destructive leaps which permeate their works, with these leaps being assimilated for the occasion to various common law crimes. Will lyrical poetry – which in France in the twentieth century, could not, from its historical determinants, survive except from extreme representations and be produced except as a freeing of violent internal movements – suddenly find itself subject to persecutions still reserved for what constitutes exact expression of thought? Considering the paucity of intelligence of poetic texts one can expect to find among those who claim to judge them not according to their artistic or human quality but according to the *letter*, so as to make them subject to one or another legal regulation, there is every reason to wonder if for the first time the poet will not cease to belong to himself, will not be forced to pay with a veritable *moral desertion* for the right not to spend his life in prison.

On 16 January 1932, the examining magistrate Benon indicted our friend Aragon with inciting soldiers to disobedience and provocation to murder serving the aims of anarchist propaganda. The reason given for this charge was the publication of his poem 'Red Front' in *Literature of the World Revolution*,¹ a journal seized by the police last November. It is hardly necessary to underline the fact that this poem, written to the glory of the USSR, and celebrating, besides its current conquests, the future conquests of the proletariat, rigorously refrains from militating for individual attacks and is limited to anticipating some of the events which, *when the time comes*, would mark the taking of power in France. Nothing is less extraordinary, less partial, than the analogy between two revolutionary movements called to succeed one another in history *at the expense of the same categories of individuals*. Aragon was able merely to mark an act of visual representation, trying to express a moment of unanimous consciousness. He made himself the objective interpreter of the terminal episode of a struggle which *he barely has the right to impassion*. This is nevertheless the only basis on which the republican government relies to threaten him with several years in prison. Such a new and scandalous charge – never to our knowledge has a French poet incurred such a heavy price for his writings – has been mentioned by only one bourgeois newspaper: *Le Populaire*. It has, moreover, been kind enough to warn the public prosecutor's office of the Seine that it was wrong to 'take these poetic roudades seriously', because 'Louis Aragon will be crowned a martyr' and 'will try to exploit his little misadventure'.

It is thus that, once again supported by 'socialists', the bourgeoisie intends, by means of its police, judges and soon by its jailers, to show poets that they must feel an invincible revulsion for social struggles, devote themselves to pure experimentation in their 'ivory towers' and only appeal to 'art for art's sake'. *Surrealism has never ceased to protest against these points of view* and its attitude has been, in this respect, so clear that in the

course of the last 18 months this same bourgeoisie forbade a surrealist film, *L'Âge d'or*, condemned one of us to three months in prison, refused a passport to another and dismissed yet another from his teaching post.

As surrealists, we declare our solidarity with the whole of the poem 'Red Front', all the more so since, in the very terms of the charge, it is the totality of this poem which is to be restrained. We take this opportunity to denounce – and for this we would like to borrow the magnificent words of 'Red Front' – capitalist decay and especially that of *imperialist and colonising* French capitalism, and to call with all our strength for the preparation of the proletarian revolution under the guidance of the Communist Party, a revolution in the image of the admirable Russian Revolution which has since constructed socialism over a sixth of the globe.²

Maxime Alexandre, André Breton, René Char, René Crevel, Paul Éluard, Georges Malkine, Pierre de Massot, Benjamin Péret, Georges Sadoul, Yves Tanguy, André Thirion, Pierre Unik.

January 1932

POETRY TRANSFIGURED

For around 100 years, the Western capitalist bourgeoisie has set up shop under the sign of 'liberty' and the clearest of its spiritual resources would seem to be used to wash this alluring sign clean of the intellectual and moral stains endlessly accruing to it. The word 'liberty' still blares out with each of its mocking letters atop the factories, barracks, Stock Exchanges, exhibitions, brothels and battlefields of Europe. The most recent ideological apparitions, even fascism, conjure themselves easily into the realm of democratic thought. It is enough, in fact, to close your eyes.

Bourgeois 'liberty' has maintained enough charm still to seduce some minds, and not just the most compliant ones.

But it is not always the greatest events which come forth to demonstrate the decrepitude of petrified ideologies. An edifice which has resisted the artillery bursts of the universal war suddenly collapses at the most feeble tremor, the steps of a hunted man whose footfall can barely be heard.

This is the case for bourgeois liberty and, for example, of the Aragon affair which has just exploded in France.

Louis Aragon published a *poem*. It is called 'Red Front'. It can be read elsewhere. Legal proceedings were instituted against the poem. Louis Aragon is liable to five years in prison.

This is not the place to open a debate about poetry, on the place it is appropriate to assign it in the realm of the spirit, on the virtues that one has a right to recognise in it, on the hopes it justifies.

Let's say only that it has been given to some of us (and this will doubtless be one of the only claims to fame of this strange age) to restore to the poem

its intrinsic value of human provocation, its immediate virtue of a demand provoking a clearly adequate *response*, like a challenge or an insult.

A direct response, itself also essentially justifiable, of *all* individual and social powers violently or insidiously placed at stake and reacting according to the means available to them.

The most subversive thing is not always the one you expect, but it is not without reason that the bourgeoisie feels itself *really* threatened by certain poetic texts.

Moreover we know the show it has put on for so long and which it continues skilfully to use.

It was enough for it to reinforce the spiritual habits of a reader purely and simply at the level of a shimmering rhetoric that might pass for sustenance through a more or less solid doctrinal contribution (metaphysical or mystical of art, beauty and so on).

Every poem thus found itself automatically relegated into the very special and particularly closed realm of aesthetic contemplation.

And it should be admitted that this method of neutralisation has not gone without achieving very real successes. The greatest have suffered from it: Lautréamont, Rimbaud. It still succeeds in the case of others. Open the papers: *Comœdia* on the Buñuel affair: '...a fantasy film', and here is *Le Populaire* on the Aragon affair: Don't take 'these poetic roulades seriously'.

The 'artistic or human quality' still gives a good return, so much so that some of us believe they must support a protest campaign and try to raise public opinion against the interpretation of 'a poetic text for judicial ends'. Admittedly this tactic has local advantages and we would be wrong to exaggerate its risks. Who would thus dare to cast doubt on the profound intentions of Breton and his friends, their foresight and the fact that they would be ready to sacrifice their liberty and even their lives for the cause they have defended for years?

It no less remains that the bourgeoisie have become aware of the insufficiency of its first means of combat. It can no longer rely on the release of certain mental tics that were so eminently favourable to it.

The poem begins to take on its full meaning. Word for word, not a single word is left. The poem takes form within social life. Henceforth, the poem incites the defenders of established order to use every available means of repression designed to counteract the authors of subversive attacks against the poet.

But in the same stroke, the bourgeoisie unmasks the gratuitousness of the ideology of liberty it had hitherto so carefully maintained. It had granted the poet this liberty so long as it could be based on the incomprehension of the reader. Any insight on the part of the reader automatically brings about judicial and police intervention.

The Aragon Affair merely reveals a process that to differing degrees happens daily and more or less universally.

One must draw conclusions that no honest mind can ignore:

It is the capitalist bourgeoisie itself that has taken it upon itself to demonstrate, in the most irrefutable way, the hypocritical vanity of its principal intellectual and moral values, and in particular to banish for ever from the mental scene the phantom of liberty it had set up as its idol.

It would be futile to protest or to appeal to principles that the facts here in question already suffice to ruin.

To those unable to accept such evident truths, nothing remains but the placing of their will to revolt in the service of the political forces capable of destroying the domination of a class that can engender and help proliferate such scandalous and pitiful misdeeds.

The signatories of this text consider that at the present moment, no other attitude or method could be recognised as valid.

René Magritte, E.L.T. Mesens, Paul Nougé, André Souris.

30 January 1932

This text, written soon after Breton's return to France and before the Surrealist Group itself had been reconstituted, was proposed by Arthur Adamov and written by him in collaboration with Breton and Marthe Robert. It can not thus strictly be said to be a surrealist document, except to the extent that its sentiments are fully surrealist and that the signatories were all people on the margins of surrealism who rarely (or no longer) participated directly in it (it could perhaps be said that this constituted a circumstantial Surrealist Group, one that existed for just a day). This text is an important social document, reflecting the mood of a time when the question 'Should we burn Kafka?' (indicative of Stalinist manoeuvring during this period) could be considered a serious issue.

THE FIRESHIPS OF FEAR

Action's enquiry into so-called 'black' literature ('Should we burn Kafka?') has placed all intellectuals, 'those informed minds whose firmness of vocation protects them from any weakness' (Caillois), in a state of excitement. Even so, we have never known them to take the bait so easily, so keen were they to answer the call of stupidity. In fact this is not just a matter of stupidity. The question was in a way suggested by those posing it by the very confusion of the age. This is what justifies this protest.

Some honest souls recently thought it was a good idea to intervene in the name of the writer's freedom. The freedom of the writer has nothing to do with whether or not one burns a written work. This is a tactical, political, police measure, alien to any debate of the mind and even to their haughty

journalistic expression. 'Should we burn Kafka?' then gives way to the order: 'Annihilate the witness.'

As naïve and vain as it is, by being thus posed the question reveals a state of mind so much more alarming in not only affecting a clan or a party, but the conscious or unconscious of everyone. One precise point, *fear*, brings together all those no longer able to walk except as part of a herd. Of all the data of the mind in which humanity is able to believe, of all the things it is unable to comprehend, nothing is left but fear: fear of the unwonted, fear of what has no language and invents its own language, fear of the spiritual defensive and offensive alike. To a humanity threatened in its existence by a measureless interrogation, and by this fact proclaimed sick and so placed in isolation, is opposed not the healthy person, but the sick person degraded by the fear which makes him see an illusion of the norm, although any norm has long been removed from life. To recognise the sickness – in the sense in which one recognises a state – is to accomplish a revolution without which any revolution of social consciousness is only a snare. Admittedly it is infinitely easier to isolate the very rare people who have made this revolution in themselves, and to present them as particular cases whose isolation, fortunately, reduces the harm they might do. In this respect, the label of 'black' literature, so convenient for concealing totally disparate elements in a confused whole, constitutes an invention as abstract as it is dishonest. You would have to be struck with blindness and imbecility to confuse the darkness of a certain more or less existential literature and the dazzling night of Kafka. The tendencies currently constituting so-called 'pessimistic' literature are, without exaggeration, the distressing survival of a naturalism of despondency. This grey – rather than black – atmosphere of sour disappointment, which the public always congratulates itself it is able to recognise with facility, has nothing in common with the pitiless effort of those who topple our walls on to the true night. It is to say the least abusive to ask people that the ruins should crush our safeguards against the ravage.

If anything must be deplored here, it is that the great attempt to follow through Kleist, Lautréamont, Dostoyevsky, Nietzsche, Rimbaud, Kafka to name only a few, has not ended in the furious and total sweeping away of a world they recognised as infectious because it was embryonic in the midst of an infinitely ridiculous consciousness.

Arthur Adamov, René Alleau, Antonin Artaud, André Breton, Michel Fardoulis-Lagrange, Georges Lambrichs, Edouard Loeb, Jean Maquet, Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, Marthe Robert, Henri Thomas.

1946

This important declaration reaffirmed the surrealist attitude towards religion at a time when the Catholic Church had become interested in claiming surrealism for the Christian tradition. Although the position it adopts seems clearly marked, it did not prevent one of the most serious crises in the Surrealist Movement from erupting in 1951, when the 'Pastoureaux Affair' led to many of the signatories of this declaration withdrawing from the group.

BACK TO YOUR KENNELS, YELPERS OF GOD

This universe, which is the same for all, has not been made by any god or man. It always has been, is, and will be an ever-living fire, kindling itself by regular measures and going out at regular measures.

Heraclitus

Although rationalism's closed face suggests that the enemy has definitively lost all trace of courage, a recrudescence of activity is revealed on the complementary face of religion. Eighteen years ago, one of us³ regretted the fact that Rimbaud was 'guilty... of not having made certain ignominious interpretations of his thought, like that of Claudel, absolutely impossible'. If it seems necessary to maintain the strict sense of such a reproach today, it is because it especially bears witness to our constant will not to yield to the dogs the values to which – in spite of strict caution, in this domain, where our demands for purity will not tolerate the slightest compromise – we always intend to lay claim. In passing let us formally warn Jacques Gengoux, author of *La Symbolique de Rimbaud*, against following the disgusting trafficker in lard by debating Rimbaud's thought with us.⁴ However, we would place ourselves in exactly the position of Rimbaud if we did not cut short the hijack attempts, this time of our own thought, that still serve the same despicable cause.

Let's mention a few of these attempts, that are moreover well known: in July 1947, in the journal *Témoignage*, a Benedictine, Dom Claude Jean-Nesmy declared: 'André Breton's programme bears witness to aspirations which run parallel to ours.' In August, Claude Mauriac wrote about *Fata Morgana* in *La Nef*: 'A Christian would not have said anything different.' In September, Jean de Cayeux declared in *Foi et Vie* that he intended to subscribe, to the extent that they could accord with the views of the ecumenical movement, with several proposals set down by another one of us.⁵ Since then there has been the penetrating study by Michel Carrouges, *Surréalisme et occultisme*, in the *Cahiers d'Hermès* which has assumed its full meaning, by which we mean its apologetic meaning, only with the recent appearance of the same author's work, *La Mystique du surhomme*. Issues 4 and 5 of *La Table ronde* contained the ravings of Claude Mauriac,

who perhaps does not consider himself a Christian but positively wiggles at the idea of entitling a future essay *Saint André Breton* – a fine joke!

There can be no argument about this, all the more because surrealist thought is not always properly speaking falsified in these writings. One could hardly accuse Carrouges, for instance (at least in his article if not in his book) of falsifying surrealist thought. But all these tactics proceed, in different ways, from an attempt at generalised fraud whose instigator is, today as always, the rabble of the Churches. The Churches, besides, now that they have lost the secrets they were momentarily able to usurp – even though in the religious domain the true repositories of secrets were generally heretics (with which surrealist thought can acknowledge certain points of contact) – no longer maintain their ascendancy over the world of ideas except aided by frauds of this type. Carrouges recognises surrealist claims to atheism. He recognises that this atheism is capable of a Promethean mysticism, in other words of an aspiration towards salvation in the very world of *mankind* in the Feuerbachian sense of the term. He opposes the Judeo-Christian elevation towards celestial Jerusalem to this humanist mysticism. The opposition is admissible. Our friend Calas, among others, had already inversely opposed, in *Foyers d'incendie*, the end that Hegel, Marx and the surrealists assigned to mankind against that of the Fathers of the Church. The fraud is thus elsewhere. It lies in using all protestations of atheism in general, and the surrealist protestation in particular, with an apologetic aim. Such a use tends to become the basis of the new apologetic system of several Churches.

No one has formulated this exorbitant claim more cynically than Pierre Klossowski in his perfidious work on Sade. According to Klossowski, Sade was not an atheist. Atheism does not exist, it is only a revolt of the creature, an extreme manifestation of his resentment towards the condition, as much carnal as spiritual, inflicted on him by the creator. Sade's god is, according to Klossowski, the god of Saint-Fond, in other words a god of evil like that of Carpocrates, but which, like any emanation of the empires of darkness, in opposing itself to the god of light, sets itself up as a necessary complement, restoring to man, even to Sade – even to the surrealist, Carrouges would say – the word of the good, capable of letting him perceive everything, even evil. The Hegelian twist to the argument will be apparent. Is it worth underlining that this is nothing but a twist? When Hegel spoke about God, Christians did not feel that the syllable produced a very authentic sound. But the god of Aristotle was not that of the Scriptures either, and yet in the age of St Thomas Aristotelian logic nonetheless gave Christianity a new lease of life for a new millennium. It seems, since Kierkegaard, that the same service was expected of the Hegelian dialectic. It is, in any case, already accepted by the Churches that to deny God is still

to affirm him and that, once this initial proposition is accepted, to fight against him is still to support him, to detest him is still to desire him.

And this is how the Christian exegesis has discovered the means, while continuing to examine what it calls the Holy Scriptures, by which it can apply itself, so as to draw the same conclusions, to texts directed against the Holy Scriptures. Such dialectical approaches, which would like to make the surrealists – as well as Sade and Rimbaud, not to say Lautréamont – contribute to the mystical exaltation of a supposed god, are not, as one might believe, initiatives arising from ‘avant-garde’ Christians. They emanate from a very general tendency to admit the antithesis as well as the thesis, not with a view to some synthesis but from a quite deliberate double-dealing, a tendency observable in particular in the eminent spheres of the Catholic Church. We know the apparently contradictory, but in fact complementary, position adopted by the clergy under the occupation. In the article referred to above, Mr de Cayeux mentions a pastoral letter in which Cardinal Suhard, interpreting Leon XIII’s sordid papal bull *Æterni Patris* in a very broad sense, it seems, makes it clear that Thomism can be appreciated contradictorily by the faithful according to whether they want to place themselves on the grounds of dogma or philosophy. Last Christmas, the same scarlet dunce sent out an appeal which said that charity was an evil when its aim was to dispense with justice and the only human solution to mankind’s misfortune was a new human order. Not to believe that the traditional conception of Christian charity is rejected for all that because it is desirable for the faithful to place themselves, once again, in an apparently contradictory but in fact complementary double point of view according to which they seek a solution in this world or in God. Should they not, moreover, appeal to them both if they want at once to conform to dogma and protect themselves against the revolutionary solution?

More examples could be given. They prove that today’s Christians are armed with arguments taken from fairly disparate theological dustbins in order to adorn the most diverse of circumstances. In these conditions all discussion is, for want of the slightest consistency in the language they use (in other words by reason of their fundamental duplicity), impossible. This has, moreover, always been the case. All the more so, despite the fact that the idea of God, considered as such, gets nothing from us but yawns of boredom, but because the circumstances in which it intervenes are always of a nature to arouse our anger, since the exegetes should not be surprised to see us again resort to the ‘crudity’ of *primary anticlericalism*, of which the words *Shit on God* written on the Charleville houses of worship remains the typical example. Whether the politicians among them tactically renounce the anathema is not enough for us to renounce what they call blasphemies, invectives which are clearly devoid in our eyes of any objective

when it comes to the divine but continue to express our irreducible aversion towards anyone who gets down on their knees.

Adolphe Acker, Sarane Alexandrian, Maurice Baskine, Jean-Louis Bédouin, Hans Bellmer, Jean Bergstrasser, Roger Bergstrasser, Maurice Blanchard, Joë Bousquet, Francis Bouvet, Victor Brauner, André Breton, Jean Brun, Pierre Cuvillier, Pierre Demarne, Charles Duits, Jean Ferry, André Frédérique, Guy Gillequin, Arthur Harfaux, Jindřich Heisler, Georges Hénein, Maurice Henry, Jacques Hérold, Véra Hérold, Marcel Jean, Alain Jouffroy, Nadine Kraïnik, Jerzy Kujawski, Pierre Lé, Stan Lélío, Pierre Mabilie, Jehan Mayoux, Francis Meunier, Nora Mitrani, Henri Parisot, Henri Pastoureau, Benjamin Péret, Gaston Puel, Louis Quesnel, Jean-Dominique Rey, Claude Richard, Jean Schuster, Seigle, Iaroslav Serpan, Hansrudy Stauffacher, Claude Tarnaud, Toyen, Clovis Trouille, Robert Valençay, Jean Vidal, Patrick Waldberg.

Paris, 14 June 1948

In 1950 a film journal, L'Âge du cinéma, was launched with the collaboration of the surrealists. It had a short lifespan, but led to the creation of one of the most important French film journals, Positif, which is still being published today and to which the surrealists have over the years continued to contribute. The final issue of L'Âge du cinéma, no. 4–5 (Aug–November 1951) was devoted entirely to surrealism. This table (see overleaf) gave the surrealists' advice on film makers to be admired or reviled; like the list of writers given on page 146, it is revealing for what it says about the qualities the surrealists collectively sought in films.

See, besides, the following films, which in various ways are exceptions to the work of their directors: *Le Brasier ardent* (Volkov); *One Way Passage* (Garnett); *Villa Viva!* (Conway); *Peter Ibbetson* (Hathaway); *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (LeRoy); *Laura* (Preminger); *Dark Passage* (D. Daves); *Hellzapoppin* (H.C. Potter); *Senza Pietà* (Lattuada); *Malombra* (Soldati).

Perhaps important omissions cannot fail to be seen in this list. These omissions are voluntary, the favourable elements counterbalancing the unfavourable ones.

The Mexican painter David Alfaro Siqueiros was a target for the surrealists on several occasions – in this case, on the occasion of his presence in an exhibition at the National Museum of Modern Art in Paris – as a particularly nasty example of a Stalinist artist. In 1967, they took revenge for his attempted assassination of Trotsky, when the poet Joyce Mansour physically assaulted him at the Havana Cultural Congress.

SEE	DON'T SEE	SEE	DON'T SEE
Méliès	Lumière	Dickinson	Carol Reed
Cohl	Disney	Man Ray	Kirsanoff
Feuillade	Delluc	Buñuel	
Mack Sennett	Capra	Vigo	L'Herbier
Chaplin		Tod Browning	Duvivier
Stroheim	Gance	De Santis	Rouquier
Langdon		Van Dyke	Wyler
Christensen	Dreyer	Storck	Machaty
Wiene	Dupont	Clouzot	Cocteau
Murnau	Griffith	Sternberg	
Paul Leni	Leni	Lewin	Pagnol
	Riefenstahl	Cooper-Schoedsack	Bresson
Kuleshov	Nicolas Ekk	Sjöberg	Sjöström
Pudovkin	Dovzhenko	King Vidor	David Lean
Eisenstein	Dziga Vertov	Pierre Prévert	Preston Sturges
Richter	Deslaw	James Whale	Feyder
Fritz Lang	Lubitsch	John Huston	René Clément
Pabst (died 1932)	Steinhoff	Visconti	Genina
Renoir		Lewis	Leenhardt
Cavalcanti	Grierson	Hamer	Rossellini

MURDERER!

The exhibition of Mexican art from pre-Columbian times, organised by Fernando Gamboa,⁶ includes a room devoted to David Alfaro Siqueiros. It is important that the public be informed about the personality of this exhibitor.

David Alfaro Siqueiros is a long-standing militant Stalinist. During the Spanish Civil War, he participated in the Lister Brigade 'leaving sinister memories' (Victor Serge). Returning to Mexico after the Spanish defeat, he led an assault against the home of Leon Trotsky on the night of 24 May 1940. That night a group of Stalinists, dressed in the police uniforms that Siqueiros obtained for them and commanded by a major (Siqueiros) and a lieutenant, turned up at the office of the guard appointed by President Cárdenas to ensure Leon Trotsky's safety. The real police officers were disarmed and tied up and the Stalinists went into the house, armed with machine guns and incendiary bombs. More than 60 shots were fired; Trotsky's grandson, then about ten years old, was wounded and one of the secretaries of the former People's Commissar, Robert Sheldon Harte, was kidnapped. His body was found on 25 June, a few miles away, in a farm rented by Leopoldo and Luis Arenal, brothers-in-law of Siqueiros. The corpse was covered in lime, bearing the traces of two bullets. 'He was killed

in his sleep' (Victor Serge). Arrested on 4 October by General Sanchez Salazar, Siqueiros was granted bail in April 1941 and fled by plane on 5 May, thanks to the complicity of Pablo Neruda, the then Chilean chief consul in Mexico, who was even suspected of having allowed Stalinists to disguise themselves as police officers at his home.

The enquiry showed that Siqueiros had acted under orders of a certain Felipe who vanished immediately after the attack. Siqueiros had obviously been in touch with Jackson Mornard who was to assassinate Trotsky on 20 August 1940, since the address given by Mornard to his companion was that of an office rented by Siqueiros.

Returning to Mexico in 1947, after a stay of six years in Chile, Siqueiros declared to the *Excelsior* newspaper in Mexico City on 23 May 1947: 'I never have and never will deny the responsibility which I hold in this affair (the 24 May attack and the murder of Robert Sheldon Harte), while affirming that I acted independently. I must state that I consider my participation to be one of the greatest honours of my life.' By this time, the dossier of the affair had already been spirited away by the Stalinists.

David Alfaro Siqueiros can only be an police agent (NKVD). He has spent several months behind the Iron Curtain. His presence in an exhibition and the place accorded to him is explained only by the politics of the organisers. His participation in this otherwise admirable exhibition constitutes a provocation it is crucial we denounce. It is inadmissible in every respect and forces us to raise the most vehement protest.

THE SURREALIST MOVEMENT

THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION

UNION OUVRIÈRE INTERNATIONALE

GRUPO DE COMBATE REVOLUCIONARIO (Spain)

PARTI COMMUNISTE INTERNATIONALISTE.

Le Libertaire, 23 May 1952

This protest against the trial of a woman who killed her lover when he rejected her is an example of the surrealists' continued belief not only in the inalienable supremacy of the commands of liberty and of love, but also of their boundless admiration for women who had been forced to the most extreme criminal actions in order to assert them. While the trial may have appeared as just one more brief media scandal at the time, this tract places Pauline Dubuisson in the elevated company of other surrealist heroines such as Germaine Berton, the Papin sisters and Violette Nozières.

FACING THE MOB

Last 21 November, the Seine Assises condemned 26 year old Pauline Dubuisson to forced labour for life for having murdered her lover at a trial that will stand as a model of disgrace.

Never before had the President, the Director of Public Prosecutions, the public prosecutor as well as the witnesses for the prosecution shown such perseverance and frenzy in accomplishing their sinister task. Joining them were the servile spirits of a certain press, among whom, shouting louder than others, one should single out the Stalinist filth Madeleine Jacob of *Libération* and Jean Laborde of *France-Soir*, from whom we expected better.

It genuinely seemed as if the fate of all these people depended on the severity of the verdict.

And doubtless this was not just an appearance, in a world where every category corresponds to an oppression, that of one class by another barely hiding the secular exploitation of the young by the old just as much as the state of subjection in which men outrageously persist in holding women.

For, rather than subject the academic and respected swine of the Lille Faculty who abused Pauline Dubuisson when she was 18 to justice for corrupting a minor, they preferred to criticise her for having offered herself to them to obtain her diplomas. They demanded explanations from a 15 year old girl who would meet Germans in her father's house: in short they accused her of not having been faithful to her country.

Pauline Dubuisson's act, a passionate consequence of a drama which had lasted since her childhood, was to be condemned by those like Messrs Jadin and Lindon who not so long ago acquitted the stupid bourgeois killer, Mrs Chevallier, a heroine from a sentimental novel and guardian of the home.

But in this disgusting trial, one individual among all the rival accusers incarnated all its aspects: Floriot. That a lawyer should strive to confuse the accused inspires the greatest disgust: he covered himself with abjection. Maître René Floriot will not be forgotten in a hurry, nor the unspeakable methods (like reducing psychiatrists to silence) he made use of in the course of the hearings and, faced with the remarkable human dignity with which Pauline Dubuisson gave evidence to her judges, the arrogance of this character giving advice on the way to commit suicide successfully.

The great shadow of mud the aforesaid Floriot brought down on his profession was fortunately partly dissipated by the admirable speech in Pauline Dubuisson's defence by Maître Baudet, to whom we are glad to offer the clearest homage.

THE EDITORIAL BOARD OF *MÉDIUM, COMMUNICATION SUR-RÉALISTE*

February 1954

This short statement, once more based on an apparently minor news item, again offered an opportunity to reaffirm the surrealist faith in love against the exigencies of the moment (in this case, conscription, inevitably deplored by the surrealists).

THE HEART'S HUE AND CRY

Last 6 July, at Lamothe-Fénelon (Lot), Andrée Lignoz (21 years old) cut off two of the fingers of her fiancé Louis Mollat (20 years old) with an axe, because she would not allow him to leave for military service in Germany (newspaper stories of 8.7.56).

Andrée could not accept the idea of a separation, and was quite resolved to prevent Louis from leaving her; she even suggested that he let the Paris-Strasbourg express tear off his arm... They had already tried unsuccessfully to commit suicide together. Of his own free will, Louis Mollat then had the courage to accept this serious mutilation. In these conditions, Andrée Lignoz will no doubt be prosecuted for 'voluntary wounding'!

We offer the most sympathetic homage to Andrée Lignoz, whose act of love and blood appears as one of the rarest a woman can still effect in a servile world where bodies are satiated and almost all consciences are resigned. Love would no longer be love if it did not sometimes need to *go beyond itself*, stretched to its most tragic capacity. We can only renew our mark of profound contempt against the teachers of social or religious hygiene who profess to curb frenetic leaps of sublime passion. Sooner or later, upon emerging from the labyrinth, mankind's line of faith will be completely identified with the line of its heart.

André Breton, Benjamin Péret, André Laude, Charles Flammand, Jacques Sénélier, Jean Schuster, Louis Janover.
Summer 1956

The Hungarian painters Simon Hantaï and Judit Reigl were members of the French Surrealist Group from 1952 to 1955, before being converted to an extreme nationalism and Catholicism under the influence of the 'gestural' artist Mathieu, with whom they joined forces for the exhibition condemned in this tract, celebrating the condemnation and murder by the Church of Siger de Brabant, a follower of Averroès, in 1270. For the surrealists, this was a transparent attempt to legitimate Church authority and tie it in with European imperialism, something of particular significance in 1957, the year the Algerian War gained momentum.

WARNING SHOT

In an age when, guitar in hand, Jesuits take over music-hall stages and recording studios, it will surprise no one that painters don the cast-offs of Dominicans. We have too great a tendency to forget that they can, if necessary, be *artists* like the ones in circuses under a rain of coins.

The interest of the events at the Galerie Kléber is different. That one can hang in place, and after all in a *public* place, a nine foot high crucifix and commemorate in its shadow and under police protection the first medieval

expressions of the Inquisition is enough to prove the total decadence of the official secularity of this country. Fifty years ago, the slightest showy procession saw the whole of the 'left', from opportunists to socialists, rise up against it. One hundred and fifty years ago, in the midst of the Restoration, a similar feat would have been unthinkable: the regime would not have survived.

Although the organisers were clever enough to devote a cycle of studies to Descartes and Voltaire, considered as 'bourgeois' and rationalist prototypes of the French Revolution, of political freemasonry and popular 'degradation' in the twentieth century, it is clear that the whole operation is mounted *against surrealism*. Certain narrow and outmoded conceptions of intellectuality against which surrealism has not ceased to struggle have been attacked only to reach more effectively – through calculated confusionism – the atheistic and revolutionary leap that surrealism is proud to make its own. Thus its anti-rationalist apparition is mentioned by these so-called enemies of rationalism as 'the triumph of anti-hierarchy'.

This negative aspect, to which we shall return, is nevertheless not the only one, and the inadequacies of 'lucid' anti-clericalism in this affair constitutes a dazzling proof that the end of the historical role of the bourgeoisie is reviving the possibilities of a certain theocracy. The 'hoax' nature of the ceremonies devoted to a twelfth-century dialectician is there only in order to hide a hardening of the cultural positions of the Catholic Church, a hardening which could surprise only the naïve. We have the most cogent reasons to think that after a gap of 20 years the Pope, who, in 1943, allowed himself to predict that Europe would become 'Christian or Cossack', has seen in the collapse of the Spanish Revolution and in the extinguishing of the Hungarian insurrection the detonator for a reconstitution of the most Catholic Holy Empire, which now requires *gurus*.

Now, the old Thomist authority is always ready to adapt itself to the evolution of 'art forms' and subtleties of mathematical analysis, provided they are devoid of content. The pillorying of a 'lay teaching' that had nevertheless become very timid, along with the cinema, vaccination and 'social security', is clarified when one weighs it up against the exaltation of the colonising role of Spain, of Hernán Cortès, 'the tamer of Indians' and of Hungary as 'the boulevard of Christendom'. Several lists of patronage have been communicated: the names one finds there relate closely or more indirectly to the Vatican and Francoist 'treasury', but everyone knows that behind these lists, there are three *intellectuals'* names: Mathieu, Hantaï and Lupasco.

The first two are painters, and they have for some time been careful to reveal their positions to us. The document entitled *Judit Reigl* and announcing an exhibition of this blue-stocking arriviste last December and January⁷ was used by Mathieu to eulogise 'Western genius', and by Hantaï

to laud the 'delirious provocative excess of the Crusaders'. All this supported on a certain aesthetic philosophy whose major lines are worth mentioning: the painter who rejects rationalism can do so only in the name of ecstasy, an ecstasy which 'in the absence of giving results and of surviving' enfolds all *possibilities*, no matter what possibilities, which 'reappear in their essential gratuity of creation' (Hantai).

We are here in the depths of subjectivism, and – if we can speak of sincerity – nothing is more favourable to the hatching of religious ideas paid off by a 'rigorous hierarchisation' of society. The domain of 'material' sensations, to borrow Marxist terminology, is that of the 'needs', or more exactly the material supports, of desire; the realm of concepts (which are not necessarily rationalist) is that of the imagination, the leap of the Idea which gives philosophy its poetic value. It is in the middle ground that religious error and imposture proliferate, it is in the incommunicability of the subjective that 'hierarchical' conspiracies come together: the *void* is an open door to fascism.

As far as the profusion of scientific references provided by Lupasco is concerned, it should be enough to convince even the most idiotic person that, in the struggle against the vile phantom of a 'god' which for centuries has oppressed human consciousness, mathematical and physical theories are of no help. For years we have seen Louis de Broglie, a militant Catholic, return to a determinist interpretation of wave form phenomena without amazing anyone except *Les Lettres françaises*, which crowns him with laurels. Then we found that Teilhard de Chardin, opportunely invoked by Judit Reigl, permitted without turning a hair the creation of a 'neo-life' through the synthesis of albuminoids, without his faith in mankind's Christian destiny being in the slightest bit shaken. How much more *lucid* the great occultist Lotus de Païni appears to be on this point, denouncing the legend of Golgotha as the *end* and not the beginning of the sacred, which was henceforth divested of any magical substance and condemned to vegetate 'over the dry wood of the intellect'.

Art is a freedom of indifference: this fine formula by Lupasco in fact signifies the freedom to commit oneself to anything. Full of a vanity embittered by taking himself to be the liquidator of the Hegelian heritage, Lupasco thinks he has found the key to the universe in a 'dynamic logic of the contradictory', which means to reabsorb *morality* under the name 'completed science': and no doubt Lupasco believes he possesses such a science. Henceforth the gratuity of 'informal' and 'transfinite' art exonerates all ignominy: it has entered the realm of *physics*, the science in which all contradictions are cancelled out.

A recent exhibition has appeared that opportunely brings to mind that the 'Dada adventure' had only an *episodic* significance. And in fact, if surrealism intended to *profane* the values of Christian society, this has never led to the *profanation* of the very ideas of the 'sacred' and of 'revelation'

or, with greater reason still, of morality: very much to the contrary, it has always accused Christianity (right through its intrusive decadence from Thomas Aquinas to the casuists denounced by Pascal and, amongst these, to those who today patronise the Galerie Kléber) of having vulgarised and transformed the 'sacred' and 'morality' into a pure, indefinitely extensible, *positivism*. On the subject of these phenomena, which are older than the shameful 'Western genius' celebrated by Mr Mathieu, his accomplices at *Nation Française* could learn something from the fine study by their friend Monnerot, or rather by direct contact with Caribbean blacks freed thanks to the 'Declaration of Rights' of 1789, or even with those Arabs still awaiting such liberation, a 'triumph of the state of law over a state of facts', as the catalogue of the ceremonies ironically says.

The annexation of *Celtism* conveying pagan traditions up to around the year 1000, an annexation completely contrary to the vastly more qualified testimony from our friend Lancelot Lengyel; the reduction of eighteenth-century esoterism to the counter-revolutionary message of the Duke of Brunswick; the denouncing of a 'Revolution' of 1944–46, of which we can find no other trace but the suicide of Drieu la Rochelle, but which they would like to convince us describes the bloody parody instigated since then in Eastern Europe. To crown this series of impostures, the organisers have copied the surrealist exhibition of 1947 while falsifying its aim. We built in their ruined state purely mythical altars without cult or dogma; with the ambiguity of spuriousness, they have raised altars, sometimes in celebration, sometimes in disparagement: the Christian altar before which they knelt has given way to the powers of banking and technical development, which they claim to turn into derision. (But both bear witness to the same character of submissiveness.)

It is not enough to confuse Plato, Aristotle and Epicurus in the same scorn to be justified in writing: 'Rome is dying... One of those corpses that have to be killed!' and then to hasten to resuscitate the said Rome with the support of a few cardinals and archbishops, the participation of Mr Arturo Lopez for whom Picabia seems to have invented *Jesus Christ the Foreign Spiv*⁸ and the blessing of Messrs Paulhan and Pauwels. The *Capetian* group which came together at the Galerie Kléber can count on powerful support, some of which we wanted to point out. It can claim to encroach on certain domains (esoterism, medieval art, etc.) in which surrealism has been marking out its own path. But on no account can we accept being confused with it. On the contrary we rejoice that once more it has been proved that the principal enemy, constantly and dangerously active, of free thought in this half of the world, is the Church. The shrugging of shoulders or sceptical smiles with which some pseudo-revolutionaries are accustomed to respond in such cases, the pretentious adulation with which these gentlemen exchange their fulsome flattery, the 'bluff' of universal pseudo-philosophy, all of these frills convince us to remain vigilant. It would be to expect too

little of the *spirit* to believe that such a publicity exercise will not give way under the *relentless* denunciation of the risks it comprises: surrealism will not allow a fascist clericalism to develop in the theoretical realm, safe from the ramblings of a few painters longing for *profitable* gigantism. We know that 'doubtful' elements are constantly seeking a formula which might allow them to move to action. Neither Christians, nor 'Cossacks', if we have been able to define fascism as the most recent attempt of the bourgeoisie to break the oldest framework within which it was contained, namely Christianity, by force, it is clear that today Christianity has chosen intransigence and reabsorbed fascism. For this reason, the rabble gathered around the prison of Siger de Brabant had the merit of clarifying the situation. We have a right to require all artists today to assume a minimum, but unambiguous, *moral* commitment in the face of the disgusting tyranny whose head, whatever its mask may be, *is in Rome*.

Jean-Louis Bédouin, Robert Benayoun, Bona, Vincent Bounoure, André Breton, J.-B. Brunius, Adrien Dax, Yves Elléouët, Charles Flammand, Georges Goldfayn, Radovan Ivsic, Louis Janover, Alain Joubert, Ado Kyrou, Gérard Legrand, Lancelot Lengyel, Alain Mangin, Joyce Mansour, Pierre Marteau, Pierre de Massot, Jehan Mayoux, Nora Mitrani, Meret Oppenheim, Benjamin Péret, José Pierre, André Pieyre de Mandiargès, Jacques Sautès, Jean Schuster, Jacques Sélénier, Jean-Claude Silbermann, Toyen.

25 March 1957

Christian forgiveness was never a surrealist value, and nor were surrealists inclined to allow writers or artists off the moral hook; here the object of this unpublished letter to the newspaper L'Express was the prospect of a rehabilitation of the author Louis-Ferdinand Céline. Again, the surrealists were going against the general mood of intellectuals in France at the time, who were largely prepared to pardon Céline his anti-Semitism and collaboration with the fascists by reason of the quality of his books. The surrealists, on the contrary, never accepted that 'artistic quality' could be separated from moral concerns (as seen for instance in the issues raised by The Aragon Affair).

AGAINST CÉLINE

To the Editor in Chief, *L'Express*
Paris, 22 June 1957

Sir,

It's hardly surprising that Céline's name once again worms its way on to the front page of certain weekly publications. In editorial offices, those who leap-frogged their way through the hoops of collaboration and survived

being pilloried in the autumn of 1944 have reclaimed their jobs. How could a nation, 95 per cent of whose public support the hunting down of 'dirty Arabs', not welcome with delight the return of the 'yid' baiter?

We are outraged that a left-wing weekly, with only flimsy excuses, devotes six pages to the infamy and intellectual filth of the person in question. We would be curious to know what kind of interest your readers would have found in the bumbling comments, interspersed with whinging, that constitute the interview? We seriously doubt that this provincial peddler's cynicism ('I am responding to your interview so that Gallimard will give me an advance') will dazzle anyone.

Not a single line of Céline's 'œuvre' displays anything but an entirely physical faculty to hold a pen and dip it in the mire. Is this enough to invite your readers to breathe the fetid miasmas given off by his 'thought', entirely dominated by rage, sordid calculation and cowardice?

Enough of Céline! Let 'heroes like Darnaud' croak! It would spare them being 'so tired, so much deferred insomnia', although this overwhelming 'deferred insomnia' wouldn't be in the slightest due to the memory of Auschwitz charnel houses, but to the illusory dangers haunting his foul character, which is nonetheless so well protected by the leaders of the IVth Republic.

This tract addresses an issue that remains vital today: scientific morality, in the light of the complicity of scientists in the nuclear industry during the Cold War, emphasising the fact that seeing science as a disinterested end with no connection to its means served to institute a false ideology.

EXPOSE THE PHYSICISTS, EMPTY THE LABORATORIES!

Today nothing, nothing at all distinguishes science from a permanent and generalised threat of death: there is no more argument about whether it should assure mankind's happiness or unhappiness, so much is it evident that it has ceased to be a means and has become an end. Modern physics has nevertheless promised, has maintained and still promises tangible results, in the form of heaps of corpses. Until then, in the face of conflicts between nations, not to say the possible annihilation of a civilisation, we react according to our customary political criteria and morality. But here the human species is promised complete destruction, whether by the cynical use of nuclear bombs, 'clean'(!) or otherwise, or by the devastation due to the waste which, *in the meantime*, pollutes the atmospheric and biological conditioning of the species in an unforeseeable way, since an insane raising of the stakes in 'experimental' explosions continues under cover of 'peaceful ends'. Revolutionary thought sees the elementary conditions of its activity reduced to such a margin that it must retreat into its sources of

revolt and, on this side of a world which no longer knows anything but how to feed its own cancer, find again the unknown possibilities of *rage*.

So it is not a humanist attitude we appeal to here. If religion was long the opium of the people, science is well placed to take up the baton. Protests against the arms race that some physicists today put on a show of signing, only clarify for us all the more their guilt complex, which is really in every case one of the most heinous vices of mankind. We know the refrain: the breast that is beaten too late, the pledge made to the bleatings of the herd by the same hand that arms the butcher. Christianity, and the police states that are its distorting mirrors, have accustomed us to it.

Names decked with official titles, at the bottom of warnings addressed to authorities incapable of equalling the scope of the cataclysm, do not, as far as we are concerned, imbue these gentlemen with a moral privilege, as they continue at the same time to claim funds, schools and fresh blood. From Jesus on the cross to the laboratory assistant who is 'anguished' but incapable of abandoning the manufacture of death, hypocrisy and masochism equal each other. The independence of youth, as well as the honour and very existence of the spirit, are threatened by a denial of conscience that is even more monstrous than this millenarian fear which will plunge generations back to the cloisters and cathedral mills.

Down with the theology of the Bomb! Let's organise propaganda against the choirmasters of scientific 'thought'! And, until we get something better, let's boycott conferences devoted to the exaltation of the atom, let's catcall films which lull or indoctrinate public opinion, let's write to the papers and public bodies to protest against the innumerable articles, reports and radio programmes, which indecently splash this new and colossal imposture.

First signatories:

Anne and Jean-Louis Bédouin, Robert Benayoun, Vincent Bounoure, André Breton, J.-B. Brunius, Adrien Dax, Aube and Yves Elléouët, Elie-Charles Flammand, Georges Goldfayn, Radovan Ivsic, Charles Krizek, Jean-Jacques Lebel, Clarisse and Gérard Legrand, Lancelot Lengyel, Jean-Bertrand Lombard, Joyce Mansour, Sophie Markowitz, Jehan Mayoux, E.L.T. Mesens, Jean Palou, Benjamin Péret, José Pierre, Jean Schuster, Jean-Claude Silbermann, Toyen.

Paris, 18 February 1958

A further development of principles followed the exhibition EROS (an exhibition focused above all on love and eroticism) organised by the surrealists between December 1959 and February 1960. Ending with a questionnaire, the tract was also envisaged as an attempt to identify potentially fruitful encounters with young groups or individuals outside the French group, a hope that does not seem to have met with any substantial response.

IT'S UP TO YOU

Taking as sole proof the International Exhibition currently bringing together the artistic testimony of its qualified representatives, the Surrealist Movement could not be assimilated to a political party or a religious sect. In other words it does not feel entitled either to solicit or to accept *adherents* in the practical sense of the word except in exceptional circumstances in which this adherence, *subsequently*, assumes the character of an explicit recognition of a community of intellectual preoccupations and moral commitments by fully participating in our activity.

However, new energies so to speak constantly offer themselves to us and present themselves as available without the interested parties being able to overcome – very often because of their extreme youth – an earlier activity, nor to affirm themselves as involved in one or another problem which is specific to us. This non-specialist availability is our guarantee that surrealism continues to avoid the hazards of ‘literary and artistic’ division, and it can always impregnate beings with the very *scope* of life. We would, however, be failing ourselves if we allowed these energies to consume themselves instead of proposing to them an understanding founded on our common aspirations, to be applied to the domains to which the *most active* participation of the two parties will serve both of them. It goes without saying that this understanding assumes the awakening, to their greatest amplitude, of certain mental waves the turbulence of which could not be satisfied by its own squandering. Its concrete objectives could be made clear from the two following fundamental points, with respect to which surrealism can flatter itself that it has never relaxed its (by definition here ‘non-aesthetic’) vigilance.

1. LIBERTY, which must be defended or encouraged on every level: not only against the traditional forces of oppression (glorifying work, the army and religion, exploding in outbreaks of racism, etc.) or against their reformist variants which content themselves with sociopolitical victories that are often more apparent than real, in any case every time sanctioned by a retreat of individual consciousness and of the solidarity of the oppressed; but also against a so-called ‘anarchism’ of primary essence absolutely unworthy of the great libertarian line, and which, hanging dishcloths and fine lingerie from the same nail, cannot fail to end either in a celebrity fit for trained monkeys, or in fascist demagoguery.
2. LOVE, to which the current exhibition unambiguously bears witness, that remains for us in every case irreconcilable with the dirty joke or cynical apathy, as much as it refuses to yield to the pressure of economic ‘necessities’.

Between these two notions, and against the threatening rise of a general hypocrisy aimed at limiting human desires by the multiplication of more or less gilded 'external signs' which point to nothing but the void, THE TRUTH in all realms appears as a necessary drive belt. It is worthy of bringing into play the capacity of unlimited exigence which, at the age of about 20, is the privilege of one and all.

None of us expects this truth to be incarnated in a doctrine, be this doctrine that of a furious 'demystification'. It must recognise and formulate only the energy of minds and hearts. The first difficulties to be overcome in order to reach the above mentioned understanding are of a *practical* order, bearing on the (at times completely physical) dispersion of those who would agree on its principle. This dispersion, which surrealism has frequently acknowledged as a handicap, cannot be better surmounted than by the people involved in it. It is with the sole end of giving them the opportunity that we submit them the following questionnaire, entreating them not to ignore it on any account. It will place in common all the affective and intellectual claims which converge with ours and the unsuspected resources they will derive from such an *association*, of which only the means is to be defined:

Does the confronting of your individual revolt with other refusals of the same order appear to you useful and necessary? What type of means do you envisage to reach them (conferences, setting up of a headquarters, instigation of a series of regular meetings, etc.)? Should this contact be the departure point for a *precise* and *concerted* action? To what should this action be applied? What type of 'organisation' do you think it would require?

For the Surrealist Movement: Jean-Louis Bédouin, Robert Benayoun, André Breton, Alan Joubert, Gérard Legrand, José Pierre, Jean Schuster, Jean-Claude Silbermann.
Paris, 9 February 1960

This text was written against the work of Bergier and Pauwels, authors of the cult book The Morning of Magicians (1961). The success of this book, and the journal they established on the back of it, Planète, represented a sort of 'new ageism' avant la lettre, precisely the dangerously vague combination of mystical and pseudo-scientific belief that simultaneously served to undermine both authentic scientific endeavour and authentic quests for the 'marvellous'. The links implied between this tendency and Nazi mystico-scientific concerns in genetics and ecology are manifest.

RUN IF YOU MUST

In *La Brèche* no. 1, an article is devoted to *Le Matin des magiciens* by Jacques Bergier and Louis Pauwels.⁹ The publication of a journal, *Planète*,

which presents itself as the direct continuation of this book, aggravates further the alarming character of the enterprise denounced in the article, and we can not delay a detailed examination of the vast programme of *Planète*, while awaiting the opportunity to classify its elements in a more precise way than Messrs Bergier and Pauwels.

To whom is *Planète* addressed? In its own words to 'anyone exercising responsibility in the administration of society' (p. 155). Undoubtedly not to those who expect to overturn this society from top to bottom, or at least judge it from a standpoint of radical and motivated defiance, without abstaining from intervening in it, not to facilitate its 'administration', but on the contrary to disturb the rule of society as much as possible. As far as we are concerned, *Planète* can thus be defined as the expression of the most modern forms of reactionary thought, hidden – partly by skill, partly by incompetence – under a veneer of delusional euphoria.

Nevertheless, we did not have to wait for this book and journal to denounce manifestations of a new type of ideological and intellectual *authoritarianism*, disparate at first sight, one still seeking coherence but which finds in them a foothold among the 'general public'. During the last few years, the almost universal consent to atomic blackmail, the birth of an art openly reliant upon clerical fascism as well as nuclear physics, and the general admiration for the exploits of Hector 'the French space rat' or the robot Gagarin appeared to us as concomitant symptoms of a *dark age* all set up to collect together past obscurantisms, whether religious or political.¹⁰

Instead of being based in the past, this new cultural tyranny raises the future as an inexorable idol. Instead of considering science to be an enemy, as the Church once did, it finds its resources and justification in it. Reciprocally, it readily rehabilitates Christianity or the vaguest formulas of a tourist-guide Oriental mysticism in the name of a psychoanalysis unworthy of its origins and of an 'anti-rationalism' which has only recently allowed certain people to practise, in vain as far as we are concerned, the politics of optimism: it is an obscurantism in the name of knowledge. Let us examine in more detail what this infallibility of 'fantastic' science entails, which browbeats us as much as that of the popes.

Above all else it is a matter of having done with the individual liberty to feel and translate what one feels. A ridiculous attack against 'literature [...] oriented to seeking personal happiness' is followed by: 'The path from the individual to the collective, and thus (*sic*) from the psychological to the metaphysical (*sic* again) is painful for the privileged.' But it will offer no pain, no difficulty for the unprivileged, those Mr Pauwels once called 'subjects',¹¹ and whom he condemned from birth to 'scientific' recruitment. The assimilation of the 'collective' to the 'metaphysical' gives a measure of the extent of Mr Pauwels' logical acuity. Let us move on to psychoanalysis, a discipline eminently concerned with 'research into superior

states of consciousness' which also figures in the programme of *Planète*. The 'considerable loss of Jung's death' is the opportunity for Mr Veraldi, a Prix Fémina winner, to seize upon the eternal slanders of the prophet of the 'collective unconscious' against Freud, an 'isolated and *therefore* Jupiterian sage', who misused the 'scabrous aspects of scandalous gossip' and was moreover *paralysed* (!) by an 'essentially negative and reductive attitude'.

It goes without saying that the physical sciences assume an important role in *Planète*. The extremely dangerous character of certain experiments is scarcely referred to, although their terrifying side is indicated with clear complacency. But who cares! A clandestine cabal of 70 experts from East and West would be able to establish the foundations for a scientific world government: they would be enough to reassure us about the life of the species and the destiny of the spirit.

All this confusion invites us into 'another world', into 'another destiny' (space-travel delirium, mutations of every type, the requirement for intellectuals to have an 'open', if not 'Martian' (!) mind), all this confusion *converges*. The word is apt. The convergence in question in fact leads us to the person who has made this word fashionable, one who is 'without any shadow of doubt', the 'most important philosopher of the twentieth century', in short to Teilhard de Chardin, 'condemned almost to silence by the Church' who precisely had been leading the way to the future. We know all about the extreme collectivism this 'mystic' claimed to deduce from biological evolution and humanity's history. At once a positivist and a Jesuit, he gains the posthumous victories owed to him on both counts. It is with his heart at peace that the black poet Senghor celebrates the man who deduced the necessary annihilation of archaic civilisations to bolster the superior unity of the species, and it is with the same tranquillity that the expert Robert Jungk abandons any critical faculty to proclaim: 'Our intelligence no longer destroys God: it has become the means to deepen knowledge of him, to measure his distance ahead of us. God is no longer surpassed: he is to come.' It is towards this perfected 'God' – the bearer of bombs, the launcher of rockets, the spreader of *psycho-chemical* drugs – that *Planète* invites us to head as the knowingly 'massified' blind.

Moreover, one would seek in vain anything among these 160 pages which appears to want to reflect the major concerns of the Earth in the current age, or the slightest uncertainty about the politics of the great powers as they divide up this Earth until they can argue over 'the cosmos'. On the contrary, *Planète* glorifies humanity's *massification*, its future 'planetisation'. The vile Kipling ('There are not many happinesses so complete as those that are snatched under the shadow of the sword') serves as a guarantee to demand 'collective and true fictions' giving accounts of 'great military events' and 'great perspectives which appear from the other side'.

Eclectic but resolutely optimistic perspectives! We begin with allusions to the 'maquis where new forms of action and thought were developed' and to the 'isolated attacks', showing 'a whole clandestine organisation', which judging from the positions of the journal's two leaders could only be of the extreme right.¹² And we pass on to the eulogy of the 'Future City', constructed by a young Muscovite architect, and where 50,000 people will live 'in the conditions of the year 2000'. If ever, hypothetically, the OAS or the Stalinist Party takes power in France, *Planète* will, with minimum difficulty, become a subsidised publication. Several headquarters have already opened up their archives to it, and it did not forget to celebrate Lo Jui Ching, Chinese chief of police since 1949, 'erudite and calm in his attitude', the inventor of 'work which transforms' and the author of this charming formula: 'Only a regime for which the sculpture of minds is the first task will survive.' This so pleased the editors of *Planète* that they quoted it twice.

Fortunately, such a lack of intellectual rigour runs through the edifice that, stupor having passed, its effect does not stand examination. This 'planet' appears as a vast relief rather than as the 'forge of the masses' Mr Pauwels dreams about: palmistry and space travel, zoology and hypnotism alternate, for example, with the republication of a preface to Lovecraft by Bergier. *Aspects of Love* by Suzanne Lilar appears totally out of place in this company, this too being a reprise of an article in *Arts*. Aesthetics, as Mr Pauwels charitably warns us, will not be forgotten: and in fact we see an unreadable text about Villon, a portfolio of repellent nudes, and the second or third version of Dada's disinterment by one Restany, a self-seeker about whom we shall have occasion to return.

Errors due to excess haste abound: 'angry young men' are to be found, it seems, in America. Among the geniuses of 'alternative literature' that include Kipling and Conan Doyle ('mixing epics with a humour [which] recalls Winston Churchill in his noblest moments') is John Buchan, in reality a sort of cut-price novelist, but the first ever official Minister of Propaganda, not forgetting the celebration of his 'brilliant career' in service of the British Empire, while his work 'touches on the strangest mysteries, and the least sentence has far-reaching reverberations' (*sic*). 'Buchan's work,' Bergier intrepidly concludes, 'seems to us more important in relation to our age than Balzac's was in relation to his.' The height of absurdity is reached by an account from Professor Kazantsev, 'director of the institute for the study of jet pipes in space travel – USSR' on the colonies of the Venusians 'with white skin and blue eyes' who supposedly built the famous ramparts around Lake Titicaca. We nevertheless know how Mr Bergier derided the delirious hypotheses of Denis Saurat on the same subject. One has to believe that everything becomes possible if Professor Kazantsev is

associated with it. As he himself says: 'The last word always belongs to science.'

It no less remains that such an attempted *reversal* exercised over everything that might seem to spring from 'modernity' forces us, from this moment, to signal our own 'difference', even if we must later issue further corrections to this so-called 'revolutionary' publication. No one can suspect us of complacency towards the excesses of subjective literature, nor of affection for 'traditional humanism'. At least the latter safeguarded the *unconditional respect* (and not unconditioned, as Mr Pauwels writes in a slip one could call 'Pavlovian') *for the human person* other than with an about turn. The all-conquering and ever-expanding anthropocentrism being instigated appears to us just as ridiculous and far more dangerous than the 'naïve' anthropocentrism of the nineteenth century that continues to be blamed for every original sin, as if its *true* heritage was too oppressive for our contemporaries who are so sure of themselves.

Faced with an increasing vulgarisation of which *Planète* is the most conspicuous result, we have barely any remedy. At least we hope to discourage readers who could be misled by its initial appearance, and also those good minds who might be tempted to participate in it.¹³ The true intellectual audacity of this time is not, cannot be in the 'New Realism' based on the contents of dustbins extolled by Mr Restany, nor in the laboratories where people are prepared for their supposed 'vocations' as mutants in a more hypocritical but no less monstrous way than in the Nazi camps, nor in the Holy Offices of every kind which hunt down liberty in the name of the 'God to come'. This audacity today, by force of circumstance, is almost everywhere coiled up on itself: but it is against everything that makes up *Planète's* fodder that it will be called upon to act irreducibly.

To associate with Planète is to enlist for the great workings of every type of reaction, is to encourage an attempted generalised lobotomy.

ROBOTS WILL NOT PASS!

Jean-Louis Bédouin, Robert Benayoun, Roger Blin, Arsène Bonafous-Murat, Vincent Bounoure, André Breton, Guy Cabanel, Adrien Dax, Charles Estienne, Henri Ginot, Georges Goldfayn, Edouard Jaguer, Alain Joubert, Robert Lagarde, Gérard Legrand, Jehan Mayoux, Jean-Marc Meloux, José Pierre, André Pieyre de Mandiargues, Paul Revel, Jean Schuster, Jean-Claude Silbermann, Claude Tarnaud, Jean-Pierre Vielfaure, and their foreign friends.

22 October 1961

The surrealists' hostility to prizes and official honours is well known, yet they saw in Sartre's refusal of the Nobel Prize something more than a gesture of refusal. This tract from issue 7 of La Brèche refers back to two key reference points in this debate – Julien Gracq's pamphlet La Littéra-

ture à l'estomac (Carpetbagger Literature) of 1950 denouncing literary prizes, and Max Ernst's exclusion from the group for accepting a major honour in 1954 – and once again emphasises the surrealist requirement that the creative act – poetic, artistic, literary or otherwise – be guaranteed by moral rigour.

THE STOCKHOLM REMINDER

Jean-Paul Sartre has refused the Nobel Prize.

Contrary to the idea, so often expressed today, that any writer or artist 'can accept or seek honours without thereby reneging on his honour', for us surrealists it has always been understood that any prize must be rejected. Without this basic reflex, creative freedom becomes corrupt and mercantile facility is just a pen stroke away.

By the beginning of this century 'Independent' exhibitions adopted the rule of conduct: 'No jury, no award'; today this formula retains all its rigour. Recently in a brief statement the painter Bissière declined in advance to be 'consecrated' in the Venice Biennale (just as Asgar Jorn rejected the Guggenheim Prize in 1963). Inversely, the Surrealist Max Ernst won the Biennale's Grand Prix in 1954; we were obliged to exclude him.

But Sartre, now! Was he not in a position, thanks to the considerable weight of his public standing, to bring down a practice Julien Gracq had already seriously weakened? Were we to witness the retrospective rout of the devotees of laurels, chased out of the Paradise of Literature thanks to a demiurge demanding intransigence? Don't you believe it, kind souls! This is something quite different. Our hero is smarter, protecting his flanks even as he spares those who 'besieged' him. Under cover of a friendly display of independence, this is a perfectly well formulated political act, a propaganda operation for the benefit of the *Eastern Bloc*. Eight years after Budapest, Mr Sartre 're-enlists'! This exceptional *opportunity* has clearly been grasped as a chance for publicity not, as claimed by the right-wing press and as *Arts* has insinuated, to boost already impressive sales or through decadent 'aestheticism', but to rehabilitate the Stalinist intelligentsia and guarantee its ideological continuity through the swings and roundabouts of the past decade.

What kind of conscience is being appealed to with eulogies to Neruda, South America's GPU (KGB) agent and protector of Siqueiros who organised the first attempt on Trotsky's life; or with the renewal of the candidature of Aragon, a 'splendid' pledge for all the crimes perpetrated in socialism's name for nearly 30 years now: the Moscow trials, the massacre of anarchists and Trotskists in Spain, the trials in Prague, Budapest and Sofia, the 'Doctors' Plot', the bloody repression of popular uprisings in East Berlin, Poznan and Budapest? Is it because Sartre, as J.-F. Revel writes, 'so often feels the need to demonstrate that other people's erroneous ideas make

their morality suspect' that now and again he juggles with some people's immorality to make us think their ideas are right?

This is how Sartre claims to pull off a fine sleight of hand. He clears the names of Aragon and Neruda¹⁴ and, in upholding their *Nobelisable* positions, reinforces the literary order he claims to fight.¹⁵ 'Peaceful coexistence', even if between cultures, obviously requires a really devious dialectics to beat work, for quite different ends, throughout the recalcitrant nominee's explanations. If his respect for the members of the Swedish Royal Academy prevents him from forcing them down the paths of the Venezuelan guerrilla underground, this respect is, in retrospect, no longer a factor when it comes to the Algerian problem. In fact, Sartre says, 'during the Algerian war, when we signed the *Declaration of the 121*, I would have accepted the prize with gratitude, since it would not only have honoured me'; if he spares the Swedish academicians, Sartre flagrantly insults the 120 other signatories of the manifesto; would some of them not have been outraged at being compromised with these very academicians?

It is not enough to refuse a prize, one must also make sure that the subsequent justifications for this action do not negate its meaning. Though his declaration, Sartre has seriously *contaminated* the very notion of refusal.

Carpetbagger literature continues...

For the Surrealist Movement: Robert Benayoun, Vincent Bounoure, André Breton, Alain Joubert, Gérard Legrand, José Pierre, Jean Schuster.
December 1964

Publication of Marcelin Pleyne's Lautréamont par lui-même occasioned this response which still stands as a surrealist critique of the foundations of what would soon be called 'post-structuralism'. The idea of claiming Lautréamont for literature was in itself offensive to the surrealists; the fact that Pleyne refused to acknowledge surrealist interest in him was additionally seen as a provocation. This detailed refutation was also necessary to protest the way in which Philippe Sollers and his followers around the journal Tel Quel were striving to use surrealist insights in a process annexing oppositional thought, drained of all revolutionary context, to serve a confused and carelessly theorised ideology. This document provides a surrealist response to some of post-structuralism's early ideological assumptions and appropriations, in this case for example the transformation of Lautréamont's call for poetry 'made by all' into its very negation in the thesis of the 'death of the author'.

BEAUTIFUL LIKE BEAUTIFUL LIKE

When he thought recently of defining the book as a *writing machine*, Mr Escarpit never dreamt he was being malicious. Condensing together, unless we are mistaken, weighty Sartrean endeavours, his only error was to imitate

the unfortunate Le Corbusier, who defined the house as a *machine for living in*, starting from a human silhouette as anaemic as it is frozen. Beneath their banality, these formulae hide a complete lack of perspective. Being unable to exist without readers, far from being specific to a book, is a sign it shares with chalked-up 'drinks menus', tax accounts, IBMs, and the daily paper in which Mr Escarpit normally runs his often quite amusing column.

Nothing proves better the extent to which 'poetry is the opposite of literature',¹⁶ the poem – in the widest sense – being the opposite of the book – in the narrow sense: *there may be times*, said Novalis, *when alphabets and account books seem poetic to us*. But to define the book as a machine – including within this the poetic book – reverses this argument: a machine is an enslaved construction, which must react faithfully to certain stimuli and satisfy certain conditions in order to transmit strength and transform movements determined in advance. If a (poetic) book could be compared to a machine it would be to a *free* machine, susceptible to error and ambiguity (to be read by an idiot) or again, to repeat a formula so famous that it is cited in contradictory ways, an *infernal machine* apparently destined to be swallowed up with what destroys it – to reappear as testimony to the emotion and sovereignty of the spirit. For example, 'this perpetual rat-trap is always reset by the captured animal and can [...] work even when hidden under straw'.¹⁷ Humour and the use of this clearly sexual metaphor, just as much as the candid sense of the marvellous, bring no abdication of critical thinking, with all due respect to those who declare that *now* we can 'read' Lautréamont.

This *now* is pregnant with meaning: the champions of the 'new rhetoric' began to feel how meagre its rations were. For 20 years, an increasing *poverty*, in both senses of the word, has reigned over 'thought' when it comes to modern poetry: to be added to the work of 'specialists', who are eminently suited to denigrate everything that is too much for them, are Mr Caillois, the premature embalmer of Saint-John Perse; Mr Sartre with his exercises in the *reduction* of Baudelaire (and he has since repeated the mistake with Mallarmé); Mr Guillemin, a talented historian who unfortunately cannot mention Vigny, not to say Hugo, without disparaging them, to the point of getting merrily bogged down in a filthy hoax by Mr Jean Dutourd.¹⁸ Elsewhere, the cheap shops around Saint-Sulpice continued to palm off Rimbauds and Sades which respectively reveal and demonstrate the existence of God: but bankruptcy threatened.

Now, preceded by two 'choice' pages in *Le Monde* (1 November 1967), there appears the special issue of *L'Arc* on Lautréamont. Here the *now!* assumed its full scope: thanks to Marcelin Pleynet and his spring chickens, we shall soon be able – with Breton dead and Aragon having invoked the great discovery of their youth in a few lines that were incidentally a bit too vitriolic for those who prefer to reduce 'a cry from the depths' or 'an

earthquake' to a game of writing – to 'learn to read' this Lautréamont around whom the surrealists, if we are to believe Raymond Jean, have jealously maintained a fierce guard to conceal 'the mystery of literary creation'(!). But let us first re-establish, with a few examples, the chronological facts:

In 1922, a future surrealist wrote of Lautréamont: 'This is not the sort of feat of strength that is fashionable today: where the author creates an image as he would juggle, shows the palms of his hands, bows and leaves. No. Lautréamont speaks alone, or has a dialogue with the wall: he has so little belief in the possibility of a reader. An intimacy exactly like love: the image resembles a desire and its father returns to it, recaptures it, and remakes it. He has not expunged what he said before. So, as they say of an etching, we have the successive states of his thought. A cerebral cinema.' The same author, having become a surrealist, published a note in 1930 which, in spite of its provocative title, really shows the dialectical passage from the *Chants* to the *Poésies*. If only Mr Sollers (see below) had pondered these two texts!¹⁹

In *Minotaure* in 1937, Paul Éluard took the trouble to quote several sentences 'plagiarised' by Ducasse. In the meantime, Mr Leon-Pierre Quint's book *Le Comte de Lautréamont et Dieu*, a non-surrealist work, was praised and drawn upon by Breton in his preface to the GLM edition. The Ducassian method was taken up by Breton and Éluard in writing up the 'corrected' *Notes on Poetry* by Valéry. To make this clear to all, the passage about plagiarism is quoted in the epigraph.

In 1947, the study by Marcel Jean and Arpad Mezei, at the time members of the Surrealist Group, sought an approach to *Maldoror* in the realms of psychoanalysis and hermeticism.

In 1950, in *Genèse de la poésie moderne*, they corrected and expanded their work.

In 1951, taking up Camus's stupid assertions about the 'almost inspired schoolboy', Breton extolled Maurice Blanchot's book (*Lautréamont et Sade*, 1949). No one, he said, has better understood that the taste for surprising the reader, with Lautréamont, depends on the fact that 'this reader is himself, and what he must surprise is the tormented centre of himself escaping towards the unknown'. If only Mr Sollers (see below) had pondered this text!

In 1952, Mr Viroux discovered the collage principles used by Lautréamont from the texts by Buffon quoted by a Dr Chesnu; in 1962, in the first attempt at a professional elucidation of the *Poésies* (Paris: Le Terrain Vague), two surrealists, G. Goldfayn and G. Legrand, concluded that this discovery is entirely satisfactory and suggested that it reveals something about a whole mental attitude. This work remains absent from Mr Pleyne's

bibliography (*Lautréamont par lui-même*): it is true that he wants to 'teach us to read'. But where is the 'guard' forbidding an approach to Lautréamont?

This issue of *L'Arc* contains some valuable texts, in particular those by Georges Mounin and Jean Roudaut. But why must a wretched thing, signed Lucienne Rochon, 'discover' in the *Poésies* two completely new contradictory sources? One would be an after-dinner speech by Professor Hinstin, published in Lille, but that Ducasse would have heard in Pau (!) and the other... the deep knowledge Ducasse had of Baudelaire. A knowledge so deep that he was aware of his campaign against Villemain, from which Ducasse is said to have borrowed some striking expressions (*L'Arc* p. 71). If we open the Pléiade edition of Baudelaire (a note on page 763, where the rather long fragments Baudelaire devoted to Villemain begin):

These notes for an article intended for *Le Figaro*, or perhaps for *La Presse*, were found, as copies, among the papers of Eugène Crépet, by his son who published them in *Mercur de France* on 1 March 1907 [...] The present framework is all that has been found of the projected article.

We don't know what is most to be admired, the 'lucidity' of the young Ducasse who in Pau was able to guess what Baudelaire entrusted to manuscripts unearthed in 1907, or the 'lucidity' of the 'inarticulate' critics that Raymond Jean names at the beginning of this issue of *L'Arc*! It is true that Hinstin's investigator concludes her paper with an appeal to 'charity'.

So let's offer him the 'umbrella' which adorns one of the daftest contributions of Mr Ponge, the well-known latter-day Malherbe: 'Open Lautréamont, and the whole of literature is turned inside out like an umbrella! Close Lautréamont, and everything falls back in place!'²⁰

One suspects it is on a completely different level that Mr Sollers is located, as he begins a very long rhapsody in *Critique* (no. 245: 'La Science de Lautréamont') with these words:

For surrealism, Lautréamont remains a pretext for verbal inflation, a reference so much more insistent as it is less questioned, an expressive shadow, a myth, under the cover of which a lyrical, moral and psychological confusionism is perpetuated:²¹ one is obliged to confess that this metaphysical emphasis²² is quite alien to us and now has only an increasingly breathless and short resonance in its defence. From the machine properly speaking, if certain of these effects are described to us, almost nothing has been said to us of a global functioning.

But Mr Sollers is not out of breath. He could cry out:

At last, o Ponge, Marcelin came who first did sanction,
Our finding in Ducasse pretexts for more attention!

But that is not taking things very seriously. Divested of everything that would risk hindering his great rigour, he assumes – to celebrate the present, and even future, ‘work’ of Mr Pleyne – a tone of pretentious eccentricity, from which, alas, any sense of comedy is lacking. He ritually quotes Maurice Blanchot, completely conjuring away an essential adjective: in his preface to the CFL edition of *L’Espérance d’une tête*, Maurice Blanchot spoke of the *apparent* ‘denial’ of Ducasse.²³ Then he returns him to limbo, for having suggested in this respect a ‘poetic experience’ comparable to that of Hölderlin reaching (albeit through madness) innocence and ‘momentary calm’.

Any idea of ‘poetic experience’ disgusts Mr Sollers. If it was a matter only of having done with tacky and imaginary biographies, spun in the style of the spider Saint-Beuve, this would be fine. But what he names Ducasse’s ‘global operation’ takes place without an author, without a book – practically without pen or paper. One does not know where a text he calls haphazardly and by turns infinite and transfinite (mathematical terms that are nevertheless quite distinct) or (why not?) *revolutionary* emerges from. This text, *Maldoror*, mingled with the *Poésies*, has never had any other existence than thanks to ‘the admirable clarity’ with which Pleyne points out that the *Chants* begin with an invocation to the *reader*, and concludes from this that they are a *reading* lesson.²⁴ For the moment, this is a reading for two voices (the choir will come later), but Sollers is already a good student: the first ‘concrete’ word of the text is *path*, which calls for a long quotation from the eminent linguist Benveniste on the meaning of the Sanskrit word *pantah*, path: which illuminates its citator so little, moreover, that he transposes it by returning to the sexual character of this beginning. But linguistics, useful for dazzling snobs, no longer is when we turn the page. It has the failing, says Sollers in an infuriated tone, of ‘distinguishing a subject of utterance and a subject of enunciation’. These nuances have to vanish in favour of ‘the utterance of the enunciation of the utterance’, which Sollers promulgates in a disdain of philosophy (the *former*, in fact, in whatever way one interprets their temporal difference, can only bring us back to the *latter*) equalling his contempt for psychology. The pulp to which he devotes himself, crushing the fragments in so many inverted commas that, at the very least, two-thirds of these pages must be Lautréamont’s crumbs, defy analysis, but not a rapid overview. Since nothing is anything but *text*, nothing has meaning except in relation to *writing*: glory be to Mr Derrida, who has discovered ‘the absence of the subject and the presence of the object’ in the spaces between words! In this way ‘the eccentric python’ is merely a ‘scriptural ring’, the phallic hair fallen from the head of God a ‘scriptural sign’ that God will restore ‘among other signs’: just like the flight of starlings or anything else...

We also find (and perhaps this is the most *significant* of all) Freud incriminated for his 'individualist and petit-bourgeois' prejudices, a vocabulary that is typically Stalinist, if it is hardly 'scriptural'. Behind the debraining machine that he tries to substitute for the internal machine, Sollers-Ubu intensifies his appeal to 'Chinese thought', which he invokes to justify (we're not making this up) this completely new audacity that is... the 'negation of the negation'. It certainly pays to appear *up to date*.²⁵

The autodafés of books dear to Mao and eternal China²⁶ no less find a subtle justification here: Lautréamont is an obscure manic precursor, whose sole intention was to allow the destruction of all texts, to the benefit of the 'paragrammatical text' of the *Tel Quel* gang. What remains of his own text is only what Messrs Pleynet and Sollers briefly put through the gigantic chopping blades, mingled with their feeble thoughts and mediocre projects. The guillotine comes down from every conceivable angle: before us, they exclaim, people only read 'what is written *in* a volume and *by* someone, and not this book itself, not the scansion²⁷ which allows the appearance and disappearance of someone'. Would reading a book then be to extinguish the reconstitution of the text through primers that, like a new breed of lettrists, our ecclesiasts of echolalia will have to provide us with? It will be seen that, contrary to their affirmation, the *loquacious* (!) era of literature is not over.

All this is certainly not so very serious. As Sollers himself says, the text belongs to everyone and no one. Only 'if the paper is patient, the reader isn't' (Joseph Joubert), and everyone, if this collective is conceivable here, is certainly not no one. It is on the other side of no one that Pleynet and Sollers situate themselves. This was not the demonstration we needed.

The tyrannical fascination exercised by Lautréamont is double edged: to have placed his enigma outside history is, for some, a cause for admiration which does not discourage knowledge, but traces its limits. It first shields the work from vulgar processes of 'reduction to the known', to leave the field, when it comes to it, open only to those high precision tools that are dialectic and analogy. Speaking here of the latter alone – so much more legitimate in that in its *latent* aspect it lies at the very source of poetry – in regard to Lautréamont it might be practised in more than one way: in making it clear, for example, that if all 'great work' contains its own critique (thus for Shakespeare the theatre about theatre), the latter, and this perhaps is the secret of its modernity, emerges in Lautréamont in a veiled and fragmentary way, instead of being a blatant argument. The critical process of Lautréamont in relation to *Maldoror* commences at the heart of this work, when the flowers compared to the cemetery tombs are struck by the judgement: 'a comparison which lacks truth'. The aim of epithets of a Homeric type ('the man with lips of sapphire and sulphur' or even 'the octopus with the gaze of silk') is only to dissolve 'the identity of the novel's

hero' in the paltry imagination of Raymond Jean; whatever their other implications might be (especially in a Freudian or alchemical sense), they are a prelude to Apollinaire's comment, before the event, about the surrealist character of the cliché *coral lips*, which they try to reinvigorate. On the other hand, Ducasse rediscovers the tone of *Maldoror* to insult 'the duck of doubt with vermouth lips' in the *Poésies*. But, he earlier said, 'know that poetry is everywhere the stupidly mocking smile of the man with the face of a duck is not'. Such calm hints reinforce the distance which separates us from the poet, but give free rein to our communication with him. They treat the mystery carefully, exalting beauty, sustaining an anxiety or a confidence in ourselves which are not the business of the *book trade*.

But, over the most feeble souls of little pedants, greedy for mutual compliments, the same fascination exerts its magnetism in the sense of a 'cretinisation' devoid of any ambivalence. Taken in its literal sense, 'the crushing of the literary gypsum' turns into the forced labour of a belated cramming which knows nothing about poetry – to say nothing about genius. It tries to insinuate its scribbling into the most snared margins anyone has ever left. And the 'readability' of Lautréamont is celebrated with recourse to this passage: 'The science I undertake is a science distinct from poetry. I am not composing the latter...' without quoting what follows: 'Through the *rudder* that directs all *poetic thought*, *billiard professors* [our emphasis] will discern the development of sentimental themes.'

O finger of Lautréamont, placed on the map of the oceans, as on a temple where the artery made only of fire beats!

Philippe Audoin, Jean-Louis Bédouin, Jean Benoît, Vincent Bounoure, Claude Boussard, Guy Cabanel, Bernard Caburet, Jorge Camacho, Agustín Cárdenas, Claude Courtot, Adrien Dax, Guy Dechezelles, Hervé Delabarre, Xavier Domingo, Nicole Espagnol, Guy Flandre, Henri Ginét, Louis Gleize, Giovanna, Jean-Michel Goutier, Jean-Pierre Guillon, Robert Guyon, Radovan Ivsic, Charles Jameux, Ted Joans, Alain Joubert, Gabriel Der Kervorkian, Robert Lagarde, Annie Le Brun, Jean-Pierre Le Goff, Gérard Legrand, Joyce Mansour, François Maurin, François Nebout, Paolo de Paranagua, Mimi Parent, José Pierre, Bernard Roger, Jean Schuster, Georges Sebbag, Jean-Claude Silbermann, François-René Simon, Jean Terrosian, Toyen, Michel Zimbacca.

Paris, 15 December 1967

4 DECLARATIONS ON COLONIALISM

The virulence of the surrealists' anti-colonialist stand is perhaps unsurprising; it is inherent in their general political position. What is noteworthy is the cogency of their analysis. Their tracts are not simply polemical, they also offer real content and an acute analysis of the cultural conditions of colonialism, denouncing intellectuals as much as politicians for their complicity with what they called 'colonial piracy'. The convergence of the surrealists with radical politics and with communism was initiated when the French government intervened in 1925 to help the Spanish suppress the Riff rebellion begun in 1921. This not only politicised the surrealists, it also alerted them to the scandal of colonial oppression. They were among the first to recognise that colonialism was not simply a political imperialism; it also had cultural consequences: the decimation of the cultural heritage of native peoples was an assault upon their very identity. In this, the surrealists went beyond the perceptions of anthropologists, who were otherwise almost alone in lamenting such loss, under the perspective of 'salvage anthropology', even while accepting its inevitability as an unfortunate consequence of the forward march of 'civilisation'. In contrast, the surrealists almost alone perceived the indelible link between political and cultural oppression and, most especially, recognised that cultural oppression of native populations disfigured any claim to civilisation: far from being an unfortunate necessity of the development of civilisation, it was a sign of a progressive degeneration of cultural values that scarred all peoples. The consistency of their anti-colonial attitude is remarkable and includes the notorious *Declaration of the 121* (1960) which played a fundamental role in galvanising opposition to the Algerian War. Although generally associated in the public mind with Sartre and de Beauvoir – who were just two of the signatories – this was actually an initiative of the Surrealist Group.

Both this document and the declaration against the Moroccan War were incendiary texts which brought the risk of serious consequences for their signatories. However, perhaps more significant than these declarations in terms of content are the three issued in the early thirties surrounding the 1931 Colonial Exhibition. A significant event in the flow of French colonialism, the exhibition attempted to unite the country at a moment of deep crisis within international capitalism. Organised at Vincennes, an almost complete little world was created in which French colonialism ruled

supreme and unchallenged. Aiming to legitimate the colonial effort and form a fresh image of France itself in which the empire, 'with its masses closely allied for defence and prosperity, will be a magnificent continuation of our French humanity', this sumptuous celebration of France as the centre of Western civilisation almost took the form of a magic ritual to exorcise reality and maintain the idea that everything was well in the world. The Surrealist Group was instrumental in opposing this imperialist celebration, publishing two tracts and organising a counter-exhibition.

After the war, surrealists remained vigilant in this domain, exposing the Vietnam War, upon which the French government surreptitiously embarked in 1947, and initiating the famous declaration of French intellectuals against the Algerian War in 1960. The spirit of these initiatives was to continue in other declarations not included here, such as a short *Letter to the American Indian Movement* of 1977 maintaining solidarity with colonial peoples, a sentiment reaffirmed by a declaration in 1992 (*So Long as Travellers Can Replace Seers*) against the celebrations for the anniversary of Columbus's discovery of the 'new world', signed by surrealists in twelve countries.

This incendiary document, a deliberate provocation by the Central Committee of the PCF against the colonial war in Morocco published in L'Humanité, was only counter-signed by the surrealists as a gesture of solidarity, but it is important for initiating the surrealists' interest in the anti-colonial struggle.

TO THE SOLDIERS AND SAILORS

Comrades,

In spite of the promises made to us in 1918, war has again broken out in Morocco, as horrible as the one that ravaged the world for more than four years.

The aim of this war is not to safeguard national honour. You are being sent to die in Morocco to allow the bankers to get their hands on the natural resources of the Riff Republic to line the pockets of a few capitalists.

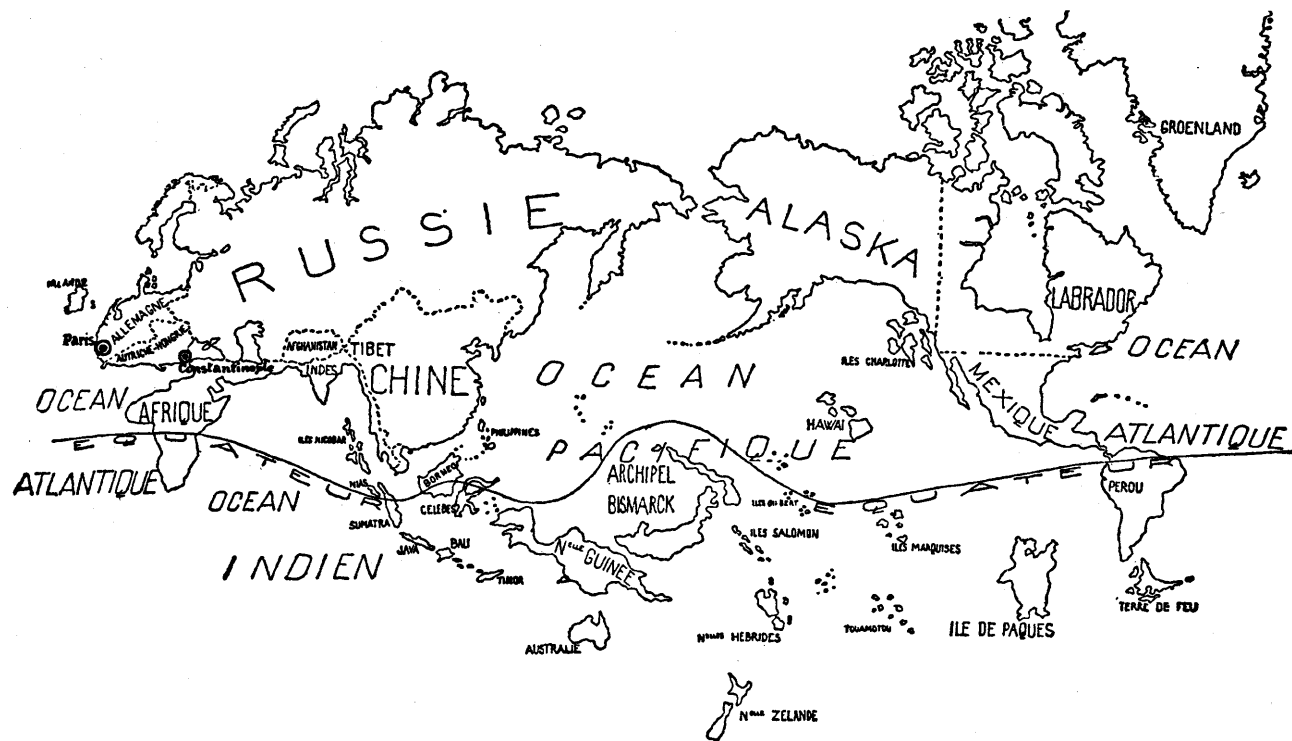
YOU ARE FIGHTING THE BANKERS' WAR...

Comrades, soldiers and sailors, we have confidence in you: we know you will do your duty toward the Riffians who are struggling for their independence. You will not be the flunkys of the banks. Remember that the Russian Bolsheviks, the glorious sailors of the Black Sea, the soldiers of Odessa, the Spanish soldiers of the Riff, have been able to stop war by fraternisation...

You know your duty:

FRATERNISE WITH THE RIFFIANS.

STOP THE MOROCCAN WAR...



The World in the Surrealist Era

Down with the war in Morocco!
 Immediate peace with the Riff!
 Long live the military evacuation of Morocco!
 Long live fraternisation with the Riffians!

Maxime Alexandre, Louis Aragon, Antonin Artaud, Georges Bessière, Joë Bousquet, Pierre Brasseur, André Breton, Robert Desnos, Paul Éluard, Max Ernst, Theodore Fraenkel, Michel Leiris, Georges Limbour, Georges Malkine, André Masson, Dušan Matić, Max Morise, Georges Neveux, Marcel Noll, Benjamin Péret, Raymond Queneau, Philippe Soupault, Dédé Sunbeam, Roland Tual, Jacques Viot, Pierre de Massot, Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes.

16 October 1925

First published in the special surrealist issue (June 1929) of the Belgian journal Variétés, this celebrated and drastically remodelled map of the world (opposite) reshapes global cultures to surrealism's contours. The disappearance of the United States, Western Europe (reduced to Paris!) and the British Isles, and the expansion of Russia, Alaska, New Guinea and Easter Island all point to surrealism's political and anthropological interests of the day. One should avoid reading too much into the apparent shrinkage of Africa, Australia and South America, areas of the globe the importance of which surrealists subsequently recognised in significant ways; had the map been redrawn at other times, it might have revealed a very different 'surrealist world'.

THE WORLD IN THE SURREALIST ERA

The 1931 Colonial Exhibition was trumpeted as the triumph of the French colonial adventure, and spectacles on display included hired 'natives' posing in reconstructed tribal villages. The surrealists were among the few who did not share the general euphoria, and this declaration sought to expose the real nature of colonialism. This initiative was followed by the counter-exhibition The Truth About the Colonies, organised in collaboration with the Anti-Imperialist League under Marx's watchword 'A people that oppresses others cannot be free'; among the exhibits was a model of a child with a begging bowl, captioned 'European Fetish'.

DON'T VISIT THE COLONIAL EXHIBITION

On the evening of 1 May 1931, two days before the inauguration of the Colonial Exhibition, the Indo-Chinese student Tao was picked up by the French police. To achieve this Chiappe¹ used lies and an anonymous letter. We now learn that, sufficient time having passed to avoid protest, this arrest, an allegedly preventive measure, was merely a prelude to his deportation to Indo-China. Tao's crime? To be a member of the Communist Party

(which is after all not illegal in France) and to have dared to be one of those protesting outside the Elysée against the execution of 40 Annamites.

In vain has world opinion been mobilised against the fate of Sacco and Vanzetti, who were condemned to death. And Tao, delivered to military justice and the justice of mandarins, has no guarantee that his life will be spared. This fine curtain-raiser was an appropriate prelude to the Vincennes exhibition in 1931.

The idea of colonial piracy (the word was illuminating but hardly strong enough) dates from the nineteenth century and is among those not to have caught on. We use our surplus capital to send ships, shovels and pickaxes to Africa and Asia, thanks to which they are finally introduced to wage labour, something we are pleased to present as a gift to the natives. It is considered perfectly reasonable that the gold reserves lying in the vaults of the Banque de France should have been *offered* by the work of millions of new slaves. But that forced – or free – labour lies at the heart of this monstrous exchange, that people whose customs (if one can learn what they are from rarely disinterested accounts) may legitimately be considered less perverted than ours (not that this is saying much!), people who unlike us have retained an insight into the true goals of the human species as regards human knowledge, love and happiness, that these people, from whom we are distinguished only by our quality of being *whites* (since, as colourless people, we are the ones who speak of others as being coloured), having worked their skins off and so strengthened a European metallurgy in 1914 in return for a pathetic collective funerary monument – one that, moreover, if we are not mistaken, was a *French* idea, responding to a *French* calculation, all of this is what entitles us in turn to inaugurate the Colonial Exhibition in our own way, considering all its enthusiasts as vultures. All the Lyauteys, Daumesnils and Doumiers² who today lord it in this France of the Moulin-Rouge are little more now than a parade of skeletons. A few days ago it was even possible to see an undefaced poster in Paris which presented Jacques Doriot as being responsible for the massacres in Indo-China. An *undefaced* poster.

The dogma of the integrity of national territory, invoked to give moral justification to these massacres, is not based on sufficient play of words to enable us to forget that hardly a week goes by without people being killed in the colonies. The presence on the inaugural platform at the Colonial Exhibition of the President of the Republic, the Emperor of Annam, the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris and several governors and thugs, opposite both the pavilion of the missionaries and those of Citroën and Renault, clearly reveals the complicity of the whole bourgeoisie in the birth of the new and particularly repugnant idea of 'Greater France'. It is to try to indoctrinate this fraudulent concept that the pavilions at Vincennes have been built. The citizens of the metropolis must be given the feeling that they are

proprietors so that they can hear the echoes of faraway gunfire without flinching. It is all about annexing a perspective of minarets and pagodas (already so popular before the war in a song about bamboo huts) to the pleasant French landscape.

In this context we have not forgotten the charming recruitment poster for the colonial army: a life of ease, with big-breasted negresses a-plenty, as the petty officer in his elegant khaki is carried around in a rickshaw by a native. A life, to be sure, of adventure and advancement.

In other respects, the advertising spares us nothing: a native king will come in person to beat the drum at the door of these papier-maché palaces. The fair is international and in this way colonial fact (a European fact, as the opening address made clear) becomes acquired fact.

With due regard to the scandalous Socialist Party and the jesuitical League of the Rights of Man, one would be hard pressed to make a distinction between good and bad types of colonisation. The pioneers of national defence in a capitalist regime, with the unspeakable Bancour at their head, can be proud of the Vincennes Luna-Park. But all those who refuse once and for all to be among the defenders of the bourgeois fatherland will recognise their duty to oppose such rejoicing and exploitation in the appropriate way in accord with the attitude of Lenin, who was the first person at the start of this century to recognise colonial peoples as allies of the world proletariat.

In response to this discourse and to the death sentences, we must respond by demanding the immediate evacuation of the colonies and the bringing to trial of the generals and officials responsible for the massacres in Annam, Lebanon, Morocco and Central Africa.

André Breton, Paul Éluard, Benjamin Péret, Georges Sadoul, Pierre Unik, André Thirion, René Crevel, Aragon, René Char, Maxime Alexandre, Yves Tanguy, Georges Malkine.

May 1931

When fire broke out at the Colonial Exhibition, destroying the Dutch East Indies pavilion and many priceless artifacts, the surrealists responded with this remarkable declaration, in which they saw the fire not as an accident but an act of negligence against indigenous populations that was fundamental to a colonialism based upon what the surrealists had branded 'colonial piracy'.

FIRST APPRAISAL OF THE COLONIAL EXHIBITION

It is we, the poets, who nail the guilty to the eternal scaffold. Future generations will insult and scorn those we condemn.

Emile Zola

On the night of 27 and 28 June the Dutch East Indies pavilion was completely destroyed by fire. 'So what?' will be the likely response of any spectator who understands the nature of the imperialist demonstration at Vincennes. People will perhaps be surprised that, since we are hardly noted as enthusiasts for the conservation of art objects, we have not abandoned ourselves to this initial reaction. Yet just as the opponents of nationalism have the duty to defend the nationalism of oppressed peoples, so the opponents of that art which is the fruit of the capitalist economy also have the duty to place the arts of the oppressed peoples dialectically in opposition to it. The pavilion which the journalists call, without the least embarrassment, the 'Dutch' pavilion unquestionably contained the most valuable manifestations of the intellectual life of Malaysia and Melanesia. As we know, the items in question were the rarest and oldest artistic artefacts known in these areas, objects which had been violently torn from those who made them and which a European government, as paradoxical as it may seem, has not been afraid to present as an advert for its own methods of colonisation.³ Even the scandalous inversion of meaning by which such an act of piracy seems to be completed was insufficient, for these objects could still satisfy the appetite of the anthropologist, the sociologist and the artist. Only by adopting a completely superficial point of view could one see the fire on 28 June as a simple accident. What has been lost, in spite of the use capitalism made of it, was destined to haunt the latter, thanks to the quality of evidence it constituted. Only materialist science could benefit from such evidence, as Marx and Engels showed in their use of the research carried out by Morgan on the Iroquois and the Hawaiians to help them in their own study of the origin of the family. The recent revelation of the arts of the so-called 'primitive' peoples has been such that modern discoveries in the realms of both art and sociology would be incomprehensible if that did not take this determining factor into consideration. Equally, in its struggle against religion, materialism can only benefit from using the inevitable comparisons between the idols of the whole world. This is something the missionaries, whose pavilion did not burn down, understand very well when they habitually mutilate fetishes and drag the natives into their schools to be taught to reproduce the features of their Christ according to the formulas of the lowest forms of European art (this comparison has been best made in the anti-religious museums in Russia).⁴ All these are excellent reasons for us to consider the destruction of the treasures of Java, Bali, Borneo, Sumatra, New Guinea, etc., which it had so elegantly gathered together under an imitation straw roof, as a sort of act of negligence on the part of capitalism. In this way *colonial work*, which begins with massacres, and is continued by conversions, forced labour and disease, reaches completion (in which connection, while the French newspapers have given the lie to the idea that the natives who came to the Colonial Exhibition brought the

threat of sleeping sickness and leprosy to Paris, we are not aware that any precautions have been taken to protect the workers at the Colonial Exhibition from the dangers of European plagues, from alcoholism to prostitution by way of tuberculosis).

If anyone thinks it excessive to indict capitalism for the fire of 28 June, we would point out that contrary to what happens when a train is derailed and the driver, whether he lives or dies, is the first person on whom blame is placed, the nightwatchman of the destroyed pavilion has been absolved from any responsibility. They were, presumably, unable to find any communists among his relatives! Even so, *Le Figaro*, among other newspapers, has drawn a direct relation between communist agitation in Malaysia and the spark that started the fire.⁵ We shall limit ourselves to noting that capitalism must take full responsibility for what currently happens at Vincennes, since it is capitalism that has coined it there, rather than blaming more specifically, for example, the missionaries. However such a charge would not be without justification if one thinks about the vile habits of the priests, from icon destruction to the falsification of texts.

As for those who might believe they perceive an awkward contradiction between our applause for the proletariat's acts of purification in burning down convents in Spain and this terrible waste which philosophically lights up the smile in the corner of Marshall Lyautey's face, we shall not content ourselves with directing them back to the beginning of this text. We will point out that if the fetishes of the Sunda Islands have an undeniable scientific value for us and have, for this reason, lost all their sacred qualities, the same cannot be said for the fetishes of Catholic inspiration (paintings by Valdès Leal, sculptures by Berruguete and collecting boxes from the firm of Bouasse-Lebel) which have not the slightest interest, either from a scientific or artistic point of view. Equally Catholicism has laws, courts, prisons, schools and money with which to protect itself and its representations of Christ, which universally have only a minimal interest compared to tikis and totems.

Without taking into account the nostalgia it imparts to the bourgeoisie's kids – you didn't know France was so big, did you? – the exhibition now merits its first appraisal. This appraisal displays a deficit that will not be offset by the price of the Angkor temple which has been sold to a film company for the purpose (as it happens!) of being burned down.

Here a simple question is raised: despite opinions to the contrary, the Dutch Indies pavilion was not built to be burned down. Nevertheless it went up like a match. The Angkor temple was actually built to be burned down. Can this not lead us to suspect that it might have been constructed from especially inflammable materials which might cause it to go the same way before its appointed date? In such circumstances, and despite the assurances given by the Prefect of Police to the municipal council that the exhibition

is the best protected place in the world against fire, does not French colonial work run the risk of being staged not only at the expense of science and art but also at the expense of those participating in it, together with a good part of the Parisian population?

Yves Tanguy, Georges Sadoul, Aragon, André Breton, André Thirion, Maxime Alexandre, Paul Eluard, Pierre Unik, René Char, Benjamin Péret, René Crevel, Georges Malkine and twelve signatures of foreign comrades.
3 July 1931

The surrealists' declarations on the Colonial Exhibition may have inspired a group of Caribbean students studying at the Sorbonne to try to form their own surrealist group, publishing a single issue of their journal, Légitime défense, a landmark publication in the development of opposition to colonialism among black people in France. This is their initial statement, which opened their journal.

LEGITIMATE DEFENCE

Declaration

This is just a forewarning. We consider ourselves totally committed. We are sure that other young people like us exist prepared to add their signatures to ours and who – to the extent that it remains compatible with continuing to live – refuse to become part of the surrounding ignominy. And we've had it with those who try, consciously or not, with smiles, work, exactitude, propriety, speeches, writings, actions and with their very being, to make us believe that things can continue as they are. We rise up against all those who don't feel suffocated by this capitalist, Christian, bourgeois world, to which our protesting bodies reluctantly belong. All around the world the Communist Party (Third International) is about to play the decisive card of the 'Spirit' – in the Hegelian sense of the word. Its defeat, however impossible it might be to imagine, would be the definitive 'end of the road' for us. We believe unreservedly in its triumph because we accept Marx's dialectical materialism freed of all misleading interpretation and victoriously put to the test of events by Lenin. In this respect, we are ready to accept the discipline such conviction demands. In the concrete realm of means of human expression, we equally unreservedly accept surrealism, with which our destiny in 1932 is linked. We refer our readers to André Breton's two manifestos and to all of the works of Aragon, André Breton, René Crevel, Salvador Dalí, Paul Éluard, Benjamin Péret and Tristan Tzara. We consider it to be one of the disgraces of our age that these works are not better known wherever French is read. And in Sade, Hegel, Lautréamont and Rimbaud – to mention just a few – we seek everything surrealism has taught us to find. We are ready to use the vast machinery that Freud has

set in motion to dissolve the bourgeois family. We are hell-bent on sincerity. We want to see clearly into our dreams and we are listening to what they have to tell us. And our dreams allow us to clearly perceive the life they claim to be able to impose on us for such a long time. Of all the filthy bourgeois conventions, we despise more than anything humanitarian hypocrisy, that stinking emanation of Christian decay. We despise pity. We don't give a damn about sentiments. We intend to shed a similar light on human psychic concretions to that which illuminates Salvador Dalí's splendid convulsive paintings, in which it sometimes seems that lovebirds, taking wing from assassinated conventions, could suddenly become inkwells or shoes or small morsels of bread.

This little journal is a provisional tool, and if it collapses we shall find others. We are indifferent to the conditions of time and space which, defining us in 1932 as people of the French Caribbean, have consequently established our initial boundaries without in the least limiting our field of action. This first collection of texts is devoted particularly to the Caribbean question as it appears to us. (The following issues, without abandoning this question, will take up many others.) And if, by its content, this collection is primarily addressed to young French Caribbeans, it is because we think it opportune to aim our first effort at people whose capacity for revolt we certainly do not underestimate. If it is especially aimed at young blacks, it is because we consider that they in particular suffer from the effects of capitalism (apart from Africa, witness Scottsboro) and that they seem to offer – in having a materially determined ethnic personality – a generally higher potential for revolt and joy. For want of a black proletariat, from which international capitalism has withheld the means of understanding us, we are addressing the children of the black bourgeoisie. We are speaking to those who are not already branded as killed established fucked-up academic successful decorated decayed provided for decorative prudish opportunists. We are speaking to those who can still accept life with some appearance of truthfulness.

Determined to be as objective as possible, we know nothing of anyone's personal life. We want to go a long way and, if we expect a lot from psychoanalytical investigation, we do not underestimate (among those initiated into psychoanalytic theory) pure and simple psychological confessions which, provided that the obstacles of everyday conventions are removed, can tell us much. We do not accept that we should be ashamed of what we suffer. The Useful is that convention constituting the backbone of the bourgeois 'reality' we want to dissect. In the realm of intellectual investigation, we oppose this 'reality' with the sincerity that allows man, through his love, to disclose the ambivalence which tolerates the elimination of that contradiction decreed by logic by which we are forced to respond to a given affective object either with the feeling defined as love or else the feeling

defined as hate. Contradiction is one of the tasks of the Useful. It does not exist in love. It does not exist in dream. And it is only by gritting our teeth horribly that we are able to endure the abominable system of constraints and restrictions, the extermination of love and the confinement of dream, generally known under the name of Western civilisation.

Emerging from the French mulatto bourgeoisie, one of the most depressing things on earth, we declare (and we shall not retract this declaration) that, faced with all the administrative, governmental, parliamentary, industrial, commercial corpses and so on, we intend – as traitors to this class – to take the path of treason as far as possible. We spit on everything they love and venerate, on everything that gives them sustenance and joy.

And all those who adopt the same attitude, no matter where they come from, will find a welcome among us.⁶

Etienne Lero, Thélus Lero, René Ménil, Jules-Marcel Monnerot, Michel Pilotin, Maurice-Sabas Quitman, Auguste Thésée, Pierre Yoyotte.

1 June 1932

This declaration appeared in English in Nancy Cunard's famous Negro: An Anthology, published in 1934, and was also signed by the Martiniquans Monnerot and Yoyotte. It takes further the critique of colonialism made in the previous statements on the Colonial Exhibition, implicating governments and institutions on a global scale, and even questioning the hugely fashionable craze in Paris of the day for 'African' jazz and dance. The original French text has been lost; the translation is by Samuel Beckett.

MURDEROUS HUMANITARIANISM

For centuries, the soldiers, priests and civil agents of imperialism, in a welter of looting, outrage and wholesale murder, have with impunity grown fat off the coloured races. Now it is the turn of the demagogues, with their counterfeit liberalism.

But the proletariat of today, whether metropolitan or colonial, is no longer to be fooled by fine words as to the real end in view, which is still, as it always was, the exploitation of the greater number for the benefit of a few slavers. Now these slavers, knowing their days to be numbered and reading the doom of their system in the world crisis, fall back on a gospel of mercy, whereas in reality they rely more than ever on their traditional methods of slaughter to enforce their tyranny.

No great penetration is required to read between the lines of the news, whether in print or on the screen: punitive expeditions, blacks lynched in America, the white scourge devastating town and country in our parliamentary kingdoms and bourgeois republics.

War, that reliable colonial epidemic, receives fresh impulse in the name of 'pacification'. France may well be proud of having launched this godsent

euphemism at the precise moment when, in the throes of pacifism, she sent forth her tried and trusty thugs with instructions to plunder all those distant and defenceless peoples from whom the intercapitalistic butchery had distracted her attentions for a space.

The most scandalous of these wars, that against the Riffians in 1925, stimulated a number of intellectuals, investors in militarism, to assert their complicity with the hangmen of jingo and capital.

Responding to the appeal of the Communist Party, we protested against the war in Morocco and made our declaration in *The Revolution First and Always*.

In a France hideously inflated from having dismembered Europe, made mincemeat of Africa, polluted Oceania and ravaged whole tracts of Asia, we surrealists pronounced ourselves in favour of changing the imperialist war, in its chronic and colonial form, into a civil war. Thus we placed our energies in the service of the revolution – of the proletariat and its struggles – and defined our attitude towards the colonial problem, and hence towards the colour question.

Gone were the days when the delegates of this snivelling capitalism might screen themselves in those abstractions which, in both secular and religious mode, were invariably inspired by the Christian ignominy and which strove on the most grossly interested grounds to masochise whatever people had not yet been contaminated by the sordid moral and religious codes in which men feign to find authority for the exploitation of their fellows.

When whole peoples had been decimated by fire and sword it became necessary to round up the survivors and domesticate them in such a cult of labour as could only proceed from the notions of original sin and atonement. The clergy and professional philanthropists have always collaborated with the army in this bloody exploitation. The colonial machinery that extracts the last penny from natural advantages hammers away with the joyful regularity of a poleaxe. The white man preaches, doses, vaccinates, assassinates and (from himself) receives absolution. With his psalms, his speeches, his guarantees of liberty, equality and fraternity, he seeks to drown the noise of his machine guns.

It is no good objecting that these periods of rapine are only a necessary phase and pave the way, in the words of the time-honoured formula, 'for an era of prosperity founded on a close and intelligent collaboration between the natives and the metropolis'! It is no good trying to palliate collective outrage and butchery by jury in the new colonies by inviting us to consider the old, and the peace and prosperity they have so long enjoyed. It is no good blustering about the Antilles and the 'happy evolution' that has enabled them to be assimilated, or very nearly, by France.

In the Antilles, as in America, the fun began with the total extermination of the natives, in spite of their having extended a most cordial reception to the Christopher Columbian invaders. Were they now – in the hour of triumph, and having come so far – to set out empty-handed for home? Never! So they sailed on to Africa and stole men. These were in due course promoted by our humanists to the ranks of slavery, but were more or less exempted from the sadism of their masters by virtue of the fact that they represented a capital which had to be safeguarded like any other capital. Their descendants, long since reduced to destitution (in the French Antilles they live on vegetables and salt cod and are dependent in the matter of clothing on whatever old guano sacks they are lucky enough to steal), constitute a black proletariat whose conditions of life are even more wretched than those of its European equivalent and which is exploited by a coloured bourgeoisie quite as ferocious as any other. This bourgeoisie, covered by the machine guns of culture, ‘elects’ such perfectly adequate representatives as ‘Hard Labour’ Diagne and ‘Twister’ Delmont.

The intellectuals of this new bourgeoisie, though they may not all be specialists in parliamentary abuse, are no better than the experts when they proclaim their devotion to the Spirit. The value of this idealism is precisely given by the manoeuvres of its doctrinaires who, in their paradise of comfortable iniquity, have organised a system of poltroonery proof against all the necessities of life and the urgent consequences of dream. These gentlemen, votaries of corpses and theosophies, go to ground in the past, vanish down the warrens of Himalayan monasteries. Even for those whom a last few shreds of shame and intelligence dissuade from invoking those current religions whose God is too frankly a God of cash, there is the call of some ‘mystic Orient’ or other. Our gallant sailors, policemen and agents of imperialist thought, in league with opium and literature, have swamped us with their irretentions of nostalgia; the function of all these idyllic alarums among the dead and gone being to distract our thoughts from the present, the abominations of the present.

A holy-saint-faced *international* of hypocrites deprecates the material progress foisted on blacks; protests, courteously, against the importation not only of alcohol, syphilis and field artillery but also of railways and printing. This comes well after the former rejoicings of its evangelical spirit at the idea of the ‘spiritual values’ current in capitalist societies, and notably respect for human life and property, which devolve naturally from enforced familiarity with fermented drinks, firearms and disease. It is scarcely necessary to add that the colonist demands this respect for property without reciprocity.

Those blacks who have merely been compelled to distort in terms of fashionable jazz the natural expression of their joy at finding themselves partakers of a universe from which Western peoples have wilfully

withdrawn may consider themselves lucky to have suffered nothing worse than degradation. The eighteenth century derived nothing from China except a repertoire of frivolities to grace the alcove. In the same way the whole object of our romantic exoticism and modern travel lust is of use only in entertaining that class of blasé client sly enough to see an interest in deflecting to his own advantage the torrent of those energies which soon – much sooner than he thinks – will close over his head.

André Breton, Roger Caillois, René Char, René Crevel, Paul Éluard, J.-M. Monnerot, Benjamin Péret, Yves Tanguy, André Thirion, Pierre Unik, Pierre Yoyotte.

1932

The colonial struggle gained momentum following the Second World War. Armed resistance against French rule emerged in Madagascar and Indo-China. The French surrealists' protest against the post-war conflicts in Vietnam is a more straightforward document than their thirties statements on colonialism, representing a restatement of an essential opposition to it rather than a penetrating critique of objective conditions.

FREEDOM IS A VIETNAMESE WORD

Is there a war in Vietnam? One can hardly doubt it. The press in 'free' France, more than ever subject to censorship, remains silent. Timidly and in a confused way, they report military victories. To reassure their families, they maintain that the soldiers have been 'economised' (this type of reporting betrays the hand of bankers). Not a word is heard about the fierce repression perpetrated there in the name of democracy. Everything is done to hide from the French people a scandal that disturbs the entire world.

Because there is indeed a war in Indo-China, an imperialist war undertaken in the name of a people who have themselves only just been liberated from five years of oppression against another people unanimous in their desire for freedom.

This aggression has a grave significance:

It shows first of all that nothing has changed: as in 1919, capitalism, having abused the most noble watchwords of freedom in the name of patriotism, intends to establish total control to continue its traditional imperialist policies and re-establish the power of its bourgeois financiers, army and clergy.

It has equally shown that the officials of the working class, contemptuous of the anti-colonialist tradition that was one of the clearest dynamics of the workers' movement, and in flagrant disregard of the oft-proclaimed right of self-determination, have assumed responsibility for this oppression or have become its accomplices – albeit not without a certain ambivalence of behaviour. Whether through corruption or blind submission to a strategy

imposed from on high, they have capitulated to demands whose unchecked effect will henceforth be to conceal or to invert the true nature of the struggle.

We appeal to those people who retain some lucidity and some sense of honesty, and remind them that it is not possible to defend freedom *here* whilst imposing servitude *elsewhere*.

It is not possible to wage such an odious war in the name of the French people without swiftly bringing in its wake appalling consequences.

The bloodbath has been deftly set up by an admiral-monk only to help maintain the fierce tyranny of capitalists, bureaucrats and priests. Let's stop kidding ourselves, shall we: there is no question of preventing Vietnam from falling into the hands of a rival imperialism. For since when has French imperialism shown any independence? Since when has it done anything, during the past quarter of a century, other than give up and sell out? What protection does it flatter itself it is giving to any of its slaves?

We surrealists, who still, as we always have, see our principal objective to be the liberation of humanity, cannot be silent in the face of such a stupid and revolting crime. Surrealism has meaning only *against* a regime whose members *stand together* in regarding this disgrace stained in blood as though it represents a joyful awakening; a regime which, the moment it is born, can collapse into the mire of compromise and extortion which can be nothing but the calculated prelude to the establishment of a new totalitarianism.

On the occasion of this new and heinous crime, surrealism declares that it has renounced none of its demands, least of all the desire for a radical transformation of society. But it knows how illusory appeals to conscience, intelligence or even people's self-interest are; how easy the lies, errors and inevitable divisions in such situations. It is for this reason that surrealism has chosen a wider and deeper domain; one which is in proportion to a true human fraternity.

It is for this reason that it raises its voice in vehement protest against imperialist aggression and extends its fraternal welcome to all those who embody, in the present moment, the becoming of freedom.

Adolphe Acker, Yves Bonnefoy, Joë Bousquet, Francis Bouvet, André Breton, Jean Brun, J.-B. Brunius, Eliane Catoni, Jean Ferry, Guy Gillequin, Jacques Halpern, Arthur Harfaux, Maurice Henry, Marcel Jean, Pierre Mabille, Jehan Mayoux, Francis Meunier, Maurice Nadeau, Henri Parisot, Henri Pastoureau, Benjamin Péret, N. and H. Seigle, Iaroslav Serpan, Yves Tanguy.

April 1947

The Algerian War was the most traumatic event in France during the fifties, dividing the country as it galvanised both the anti-colonial struggle and patriotic support for the war and the 'civilising' mission of France. This

division – still alive in France today and a key factor in the rise of the National Front – was activated among intellectuals with the following notorious document, more commonly known as the ‘Declaration of the 121’ after the initial number of signatories, initiated by the Surrealist Group and eventually signed by 247 French intellectuals, incurring furious opposition. Here we have only given the names of those who have directly participated in surrealist activities and those who contributed to writing the document; the full list of signatories can be found on pp. 390–91 in volume 2 of José Pierre, Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives, which gives a full account of the circumstances of its composition. According to Jean Schuster, the idea first came from Dionys Mascolo, a close friend of several surrealists, although not a member of the group. Mascolo and Schuster wrote the initial text and circulated it among the surrealists, several of whom made amendments. It was then sent to Maurice Blanchot, who made further modifications, and it was finally agreed at a meeting between Breton, Mascolo, Schuster and Claude Roy.

DECLARATION ON THE RIGHT TO INSUBORDINATION IN THE ALGERIAN WAR

A very important movement is developing in France, and French and international opinion needs to be better informed about it. At a moment when the Algerian War has taken a new turn we must remain clear about what is involved and not forget the depth of the crisis that has opened up during the past six years.

Today more and more French people are pursued, condemned and imprisoned for having refused to participate in this war or for having helped the Algerian combatants. Misrepresented by their adversaries, but also made palatable by those whose duty it should be to defend them, their reasons remain generally misunderstood. It is not enough to state that such resistance to public power is respectable. This protest by people in defence of their honour, and of their righteous concept of truth, has a significance that goes beyond the specific circumstances in which it is affirmed, and which it is important to grasp irrespective of what results in the course of events.

For the Algerians the struggle, whether pursued by military or diplomatic means, involves no equivocation. It is a war of national independence. But what is its nature for the French? It is not a foreign war. French territory has never been threatened. More than this: it is a war directed against a people that the state is determined to call French, even though this is precisely what they are struggling against. It is not even sufficient to define it as a war of conquest, an imperialist war, heightened by an accompanying racism. This is true of all wars, and the uncertainty remains.

In fact, by a decision that constituted a fundamental abuse, the state first mobilised entire classes of citizens for the sole end of carrying out what it admits is a police operation against an oppressed population, a population in revolt only by want of elementary dignity, since it demands to be recognised at last as an independent community.

Neither a war of conquest, nor a war of 'national defence', nor a civil war, the Algerian War has little by little become an action that serves only the interests of the army itself and the caste which refuses to give an inch faced with an uprising whose validity even the civil powers, acknowledging the general collapse of colonial empires, seem ready to recognise.

Today it is primarily the will of the army that sustains this criminal and absurd combat, and this army, through the political role that several of its highest representatives have obliged it to play, sometimes acts openly and violently beyond all legality. As such it betrays the role that the whole country has entrusted to it and so compromises and risks perverting the nation itself, by forcing its citizens, under its orders, to be accomplices of a factious and degrading action. Do we have to recall that, 15 years after the destruction of the Hitlerian order, French militarism, consequent to the demands of such a war, has gone as far as the restoration of torture and its reinstatement as an institution in Europe?

It is in such conditions that so many French people have come to question once again the meaning of traditional values and obligations. What can good citizenship mean when, in certain circumstances, it becomes shameful submission? Are there not moments when the refusal to serve becomes a sacred duty, when 'treason' means a courageous respect for the truth? And when the army, by the will of those who use it as a means of racist or ideological domination, places itself in open or latent rebellion against democratic institutions, does not revolt against the army assume a new meaning?

The question of conscience has been there from the beginning of the war. As the war has continued, it is natural that such a question of conscience should become concretely resolved through more and more acts of insubordination and desertion, as well as by providing help and refuge for the Algerian combatants. It is a free movement that has developed at the margins of all the official parties, without their help and ultimately in spite of their disavowal. Once more, with no need of organisation or pre-established slogans, a *resistance* has been born through a spontaneous assumption of conscience, seeking and inventing forms of action and means of struggle in accord with a new situation whose meaning and real implications the political groups and the press have refused, whether through inertia or doctrinal timidity or due to moral or nationalist prejudices, to recognise.

The undersigned, believing that each person must speak out about acts it is henceforth impossible to consider as just news items about an individual

adventure, and believing that they themselves, according to their position and means, are under a duty to intervene, not to give advice to people who have to make their own decisions in the face of such grave problems, but to demand that those who judge them must not be taken in by the equivocation of words and values, accordingly declare:

- We respect the refusal to take arms against the Algerian people and consider it justified.
- We respect the behaviour of those French people who regard it as their duty to give aid and refuge to the Algerians who have been oppressed in the name of the French people and consider it justified.
- The cause of the Algerian people, which contributes in a decisive fashion to the destruction of the colonial system, is the cause of all free people.

Jean-Louis Bédouin, Robert Benayoun, Maurice Blanchot, Raymond Borde, Vincent Bounoure, André Breton, Guy Cabanal, Simone Collinet, Adrien Dax, Yves Elléouet, Charles Estienne, Jean Ferry, Dr Theodore Fraenkel, Georges Goldfayn, Edouard Jaguer, Alain Joubert, Robert Lagarde, Jacqueline Lamba, Gérard Legrand, Michel Leiris, Georges Limbour, Dionys Mascolo, André Masson, Pierre de Massot, Jehan Mayoux, José Pierre, André Pieyre de Mandiargues, Claude Roy, Jean Schuster, Jean-Claude Silbermann, Claude Tarnaud, Tristan Tzara and others.

1 September 1960

APPENDIX 1

From the end of 1968 through the early months of 1969 the French Surrealist Group degenerated into negative quarrels and in February five members effectively 'resigned' from the group by issuing the tract Aux grands oublieurs, salut! This was followed by the declaration Sas of 23 March 1969, signed by 27 people and announcing the suspension of group activity. Jean Schuster, whose withdrawal from the group had sparked these events, took it upon himself to account for the collapse of the collectivity in this essay published in September 1969; its distinctions between 'historical' forms of surrealism and its nature as an 'eternal counter-current escaping history in its latent continuity' have in many ways reaffirmed a key question for surrealists wishing to continue activity today.

JEAN SCHUSTER

THE FOURTH CANTO

A man or a stone or a tree will begin the fourth canto.

Maldoror

When André Breton died on 28 September 1966, he did not leave any fully traced course to the movement he founded and invigorated to his final days, only an acquired knowledge, a treasure either to be developed or contemplated. Deciding to pursue a collective activity they all felt to be an inner necessity, the surrealists regarded this as sufficient criterion for anyone unsure of their footing on treacherous ground. Indeed, this terrain was soon to fulfil its promises. As we know, the world is entering a phase in which revolutionary energy is melting away and where new forms are rising against repressive institutions. The surrealist hope for radical transformation of society, indissolubly linked to the remoulding of the structures of the human mind, this ever thwarted hope, once relegated to abstraction by what seemed general consent, is acquiring fresh vigour. In this way, surrealism is facing a special historical conjecture of which it may be said that it determines itself in this respect through both unfavourable subjective conditions (the consequences of Breton's death) and favourable objective conditions (the renewal of revolutionary thought and action).

In such cases, subjective conditions are too often underestimated because of the tantalising illusion fostered by objective conditions. Once the illusion vanishes, the dissolving factors have completed their work. I must here insist on one aspect of Breton's personality. His sudden loss cut short the harmonious sharing of intellectual and emotional resources within the surrealist movement, not only according to their intrinsic value, but above all through the variable power of attraction they exerted in relation over each individual. Anyone who knew Breton knows that he was the contrary of a dictator. If the line he took, which he even described as 'highly sinuous', at times unsettled his closest friends, he never imposed its meanderings by argument of authority. No one had a greater responsiveness to the voice of the other, or a greater ability to internalise the feeling that it might, on occasion, be more accurate than his own. Apart from what touched upon the passionate impulses he had made sacred once and for all – love, for example – he softened his position rather more often than he hardened it. Frequently, after exhausting the arguments – with a polemical verve that stemmed as much from humour as from anger, from analytical reasoning as from intuition – he came around to accepting a position that did not meet with his full approval. I could give many examples, but will confine myself to one, as little known as it is informative. In 1954, Breton spent several days trying to avoid the expulsion of Max Ernst, agreed by the near-totality of the group. If he ultimately rallied to the decision, it was because he was partly convinced of its necessity of course, but also because he responded in a frame of mind that must be described as democratic. Nevertheless, the essential point is that Breton did possess genuine authority within the Surrealist Group. It was, however, contrary to that of a leader's, in aiming at the development of ideas through mental stimulation and not their petrification through intimidating others. I believe this was not so much due to his historical prestige, nor even to his ability to arouse intellectual fascination, but to his aptitude for perceiving, in a field laid open to the four winds, an essence common to the most varied phenomena of the external world. Nothing could have led him to setting up a hierarchy, unless it were a provisional and circumstantial one, one justified solely on the grounds of expediency, between a speech by Saint-Just, the polished surface of agate, the keys of Basil Valentin, the unseeing stare of an Easter Island statue, the 'umour' of Jacques Vaché, the Petrograd Soviet, the meeting with Nadja as in a waking dream, a verse by Germain Nouveau, the Watts riots, a Gaulish coin, psychoanalytical theory, Joan Miró's 'realist' old shoe, the wing of the *fulgora laternaria*, and the Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle at certain times of the day. André Breton alone knew how to bring such magnetic attractions into an internal system of representation where they played freely together. No matter how passionately he might, at a given moment, plunge into any given one, the existence of them all (and above all

the infinite possibility of experiencing new ones) prevented him from being imprisoned in any of them. He was uniquely aware of their law of harmony, of which others may only have an inkling as long as they remain subjected to the divorce, generally considered irremediable, between nature and culture, mental and social processes, consciousness and desire. He alone had a way of conveying this to a group which, considered in its entirety as the product of individual needs of each member, was not satisfied with merely reflecting them, but validated their transfer to the collective level and so guaranteed its own dynamism and cohesion.

Nothing could stop Breton, on his death, from taking away the secret of this harmony and the rules of a game of which knowing how to play it is not enough.

The capacity for theoretical and practical intervention on the part of the Surrealist Movement during 1967 and 1968 can be assessed mainly by consulting the seven issues of *L'Archibras*, published from April 1967 to March 1969. Cuba, Prague, May '68, it is history itself tracing a path surrealism recognises as its own and to which it remains committed. The great collective festivity (beginning in Havana in July 1967 and continued in Prague the following April, and reaching a climax in the streets of Paris two weeks later) revealed that a superior exigency of the mind – poetic necessity – would henceforth condition political reality.

The reader or historian, working from readily available documentation, will judge whether surrealism, after Breton and in the circumstances recounted, was able to rise to the demands of both its past and contemporary events. However, as far as I am concerned, even if the verdict were favourable, it could not stand as a passport for the period to come. One fundamental element is missing, by very definition, from the records – that arising out of subjective conditions, an essential part of which I have thought fit to point out: namely, and to put it bluntly, I am saying that the price, which had to be paid in rather academic debates, in compromise or conversely in shows of strength, in order to concretise the slightest intervention, was far too high: stubborn persistence could only lead to dishonourable intellectual bankruptcy. No doubt one may be led to think that, unless it is monolithic, hierarchical, bureaucratic and governed by a dogmatic system, any group thrives on free expression among its members, violent clashes at times, and what is generally termed the right of tendencies.¹ However, the vitality of each group equally depends on a minimum of internal cohesion. I do not feel mistaken in asserting that it was on realising the absence of any internal cohesion within the group that, last February, myself and a number of friends decided to leave it to a fate which no longer concerned us. Those who seemed prepared to pursue indefinitely an activity in which any proposal for action or reflection or the

slightest critical comment (whether over details or fundamentals) was mired in a permanent controversy, to become finally substituted for any joint research with any impact on reality, also gave up the maintenance of any label-bearing practice devoid of meaning. Issue 7 of *L'Archibras*, dated March but already completed in January 1969, is the final manifestation of surrealism as an organised movement in France. For all that, is surrealism dead? No.

The water of the gaze shatters the object gazed upon. Each fracture is a definition of the object. For surrealism, shattered by so many gazes, every definition *leaves something to be desired* and I hope that, for once, this expression will be understood literally: it may suffice to call upon poetic exigency which, in the time it steals its secrets from the night, desires it in a denser form and acknowledges it as infinite.

Thus all light propagates the double presence of a bright zone, definitively acquired from the night enclosing it, and of night itself, endlessly inviolable and violated. Yet all light reveals a temporary, blurred halo, a locus of the counter-evidence, where the surrealist intention is grasped by an uncertain approach, conceived in doubt of its own method, supported by shifting yet unquestionable reference points, if, perchance, contingency bestows a paradoxical expression on that intention.

It is there, in a twilight that language has given up hope of mastering – since one can only indiscriminately account for this phenomenon by saying that night falls or day falls – that surrealism will tear itself from the grips of today's dissectors.

Surrealism is an ambiguous word. It designates both an ontological component of the human mind, its eternal counter-current² escaping history in its latent continuity, in order to be inscribed therein in its manifest discontinuity, and the historically determined movement, which has recognised the counter-current and taken it upon itself to exalt, enrich and arm it in preparation for triumph. Between these two surrealisms, an identity relationship is at work, like the one between a constant and a variable. Consequently, the surrealism described here as 'historical' in relation to 'eternal' surrealism has a twofold nature, in that it is momentarily mingled with the 'eternal' surrealism of which it is a specific manifestation of its discontinuous inscription in history. It is a privileged manifestation in being a realisation, in naming the phenomenon once and for all, and in taking this name to describe all its tangible forms, its individual and collective output, its internal organisation and those who participated in it. Nevertheless, however privileged it might be, 'historical' surrealism could never be identified with 'eternal' surrealism, nor could it transform what is merely a circumstantial identity relationship into an identification: such an undertaking would stamp the whole surrealist project

with idealism – an inconsequent one at that, since ‘historical’ surrealism would be attributing itself with the strange faculty of having a beginning but not an end. Indeed, this would make it a desperate attempt at overrunning the time allotted to it through the momentum it has gained. If, on the other hand, the surrealists question the identity relationship, they notice that its smooth functioning comes to a halt when its nominal component (the word surrealism) has stolen a march on its real component (to which the internal cohesion of the group is the key) in order to mask its progressive dissolution. Henceforth, to conclude that ‘historical’ surrealism has died is an understanding congruent with that which allowed its birth, a birth which was not birth,³ a death which is no more death than the thirteenth card of the Tarot. [...]

Le Monde, 4 October 1969

Translated by Peter Wood

APPENDIX 2

DEFINITIONS OF SURREALISM

SURREALISM: *n.* Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which it is proposed to express – verbally, in writing or by any other means – the actual functioning of thought. The dictation of thought, in the absence of all control exercised by reason, and outside all aesthetic or moral considerations.

ENCYCLOPAEDIA: *philos.* Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dream, in all the disinterested play of thought. It tends towards the ruin once and for all of all psychic mechanisms and to substitute itself for them in solving the principal problems of life.

André Breton, 1924

This definition was later modified by Breton in 1934, regretting that it only takes account of ‘surrealism’s idealist disposition’, adding, ‘I deceived myself [...] in advocating the use of an automatic thought not only removed from all control exercised by reason but also disengaged from “all aesthetic or moral considerations”’. It should at least have said *conscious* aesthetic or moral considerations.’

[Surrealism] is at best a notion that slips away like the horizon before the walker, for like the horizon it is a relation between the sensibility and what it will never attain.

Louis Aragon, 1924

SURREALISM is not a new or easier means of expression, nor even a metaphysics of poetry; it is a total means of complete liberation of the mind and all that resembles it.

The French Surrealist Group, 1925

I consider that for us surrealism IS life, and no diversification is to be introduced between what in surrealism is a pure speculation of the mind and what is given as a reinstallation of life from the surrealist perspective. We must be the first to get used to this confusion and aim with all our strength at the construction of this confusion.

Antonin Artaud, 1925

Surrealism is for me nothing but the insidious extension of the invisible, the unconscious within reach.

Antonin Artaud, 1927

The vice called surrealism is the disordered and impassioned use of the image as a drug, or rather the uncontrolled provocation of the image for itself and for what it brings in the domain of representation by way of imperturbable metamorphosis: for each image, every time, forces you to reconsider the whole universe.

Louis Aragon, 1928

Everything I love, everything I think and feel, leads me to a particular philosophy of immanence in accord with which surreality is comprised in reality itself and is neither superior nor external to it. And reciprocally, too, since the container is also the content. One could almost say that it will be a communicating vessel between the container and the contained.

André Breton, 1928

The simplest surrealist act consists in going down to the street, revolver in hand, and shooting into the crowd for as long as one can.

André Breton, 1930

Everything tends to make us believe that there exists a certain point of the mind at which life and death, real and imaginary, past and future, communicable and incommunicable, high and low, cease to be perceived contradictorily. It would be vain to seek in surrealist activity any other aim than the hope of determining this point.

André Breton, 1930

The idea of surrealism tends quite simply towards the total recuperation of our psychic strength by a means that is none other than the vertiginous descent into ourselves, the systematic illumination of hidden places and the progressive darkening of other places, the perpetual promenade in the midst of forbidden zones.

André Breton, 1930

A certain immediate ambiguity within this word [surrealism] can lead to the idea that it designates some sort of transcendental attitude, when it expresses, on the contrary [...] a will to deepen the real, to develop, in an ever clearer and more passionate way, a consciousness of the tangible world.

André Breton, 1934

Surrealism, which is the constructive evolution of Dadaism, intends to integrate human poetry into life itself, that is by implicitly submitting itself

to the dialectical movement of human becoming. Its limits can only be those of mankind in relation to the earth and vice versa.

Marcel Lecomte/E.L.T. Mesens, 1935

Surrealism is the collective experience of individualism.

André Masson, 1938

Surrealism is the internal terror of man, his forests, his temples, his dawns, his splendours. Surrealism consists of a representation of the formless, of that which has not yet taken form. It is the expression of the unconscious, of that which has not yet been discerned and is at the root of all mental civilisation.

Alberto Savinio, 1940

[Surrealism involves] seeking the means to explore the personal and collective unconscious. The desire to reject the enormously antiquated vision of beauty as envisaged by bourgeois Cartesians based on a Greco-Latin-Louis XIV pseudo-classicism. The desire to draw closer to the so-called primitive, naïve or savage arts. The will to introduce into such exploration dialectical criticism and all the tools that materialism, biological science and psychoanalysis, etc. has painstakingly forged. [...] What is most important is to introduce knowledge into domains rejected by academic science and exploited by charlatans, which means the relation between mankind and the cosmos.

Pierre Mabille, 1941

Surrealism can only exist in continual opposition to the whole world and to itself, in that negation of negation guided by the most inexpressible delirium, and without of course losing one or other aspect of its immediate revolutionary power.

Gherasim Luca/Trost, 1945

Surrealism – whose flames still burn – as an autonomous doctrine or specific method, does not exist. But it is a historical fact that this fire still illuminates the intellectual landscape as far as the horizon.

Paul Nougé, 1947

The conjunction of the collective movement and individual contributions is an aspect of the dialectic that exists between the signifier and the signified, between the thought formed by human intercommunication on what might be called a cosmic level and the Word which gives it a specific form, an expression, a recognisable face, and which is its crystallisation. [...] Surrealism, in testing the modes of passage between the unconscious and the conscious, gave itself the study of this fundamental problem.

Pierre Mabille, 1948

No one belongs to this movement any more, yet everyone feels they could have been part of it. Has surrealism vanished? It is neither here nor there: it is everywhere. It is a phantom, a dazzling haunting.

Maurice Blanchot, 1949

SURREALISM IS WHAT WILL BE.

The French Surrealist Group, 1947

To be nothing. To be everything. To open the individual.

To navigate. To awaken. To conceal.

The French Surrealist Group, 1948

Neither a school nor a sect, much more than an attitude, surrealism is, in the most aggressive and complete sense of the word, an adventure. An adventure of humanity and the real thrown together in the same movement.

The French Surrealist Group, 1951

Surrealism is a tornado on the edge of an atmospheric depression where the norms of humanist individualism founder.

Jacques Lacan, 1959

Surrealism is the desperate attempt of poetry to incarnate itself in history.

Octavio Paz, 1959

In my view, what is essential to surrealism is a sort of rage. [...] Against the existing state of things. A rage against life as it is...

Georges Bataille, 1961

Surrealism is the direct knowledge of reality; reality is absolute and unrelated to the various ways of interpreting it; [...] Surrealism is the knowledge of absolute thought.

René Magritte, 1965

Surrealism represents a desperate effort and passionate quest for continuity, a continuity of the subject with its own internal spirit [...] and also a continuity between the subject and object, between the subject and the external world.

Philippe Audoin, 1966

Surrealism is not poetry but a poetics and even more, and more decisively, a doctrine, a vision of the world. External revelation, inspiration breaks the subjectivist labyrinth: it is something that assaults us as soon as consciousness dozes, something that irrupts through a door that only opens when the doors of wakefulness close. Internal revelation, it causes our belief in the unity and identity of that same consciousness to waver: there is no self and within each one of us diverse voices are in conflict. [...] Thus, the true

originality of surrealism consists not only in having made of inspiration an idea but, more radically, an *idea of the world*.

Octavio Paz, 1967

Surrealism is always what will be. It will be the contrary of what it has been if it believes it is able to live on its own heritage.

Vincent Bounoure, 1967

Surrealism is in search of an authentic language, the language of negation, as the great refusal to accept the rules of a game in which the dice are loaded.

Nicolas Calas, 1981

[Surrealism is] a visceral aspiration towards a system which would be at once aesthetic, moral and scientific. Truth, Beauty and Efficacy brought together. A single thing.

Michel Leiris, 1989

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NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. The French Surrealist Group's collective introduction to *Néon*, no. 1 (January 1948).
2. Jacques Lacan, *Seminar VII* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 161.
3. Philippe Audoin, *Les Surréalistes* (Paris: Seuil, 1974), p. 165.
4. Maurice Nadeau, *The History of Surrealism* (London: Cape, 1968), p. 98. Victor Crastre described the effects of temporarily moving the surrealist café from the hubbub of the Cyrano to a quieter but more bourgeois establishment around the corner: 'Breton was bored to death; his friends felt lost, Desnos had lost his verve and Péret his laugh. We had to go back to the Cyrano' (*Le Drame du surréalisme* (Paris: Les Éditions du Temps, 1969), p. 81).
5. André Thirion, *Revolutionaries Without Revolution* (London: Cassell, 1972), p. 136.
6. Robert Benayoun, *Le Rire des surréalistes* (Paris: Bougie du Sapeur, 1988), p. 54.
7. Jochen Noth in discussion in Ferdinand Alquié (ed.), *Entretiens sur le surréalisme* (Paris: Mouton, 1969), p. 514.
8. See Jules Monnerot, *La Poésie moderne et le sacré* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945).
9. Julien Gracq, *André Breton, quelques aspects de l'auteur* (Paris: José Corti, 1948), p. 34.
10. Jean Ferry, 'Kafka or 'The Secret Society'', in J. H. Matthews, *The Custom-House of Desire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).
11. Gracq, *André Breton*, p. 44.
12. In fact, sub-groups always had been present within Parisian surrealism, and any overview of the group's cohesive, homogeneous nature should also consider its ability to absorb, tolerate or reject smaller collective units. In the first few years of surrealism's history, sub-groups at rue Blomet and rue du Château (the latter described in Thirion's *Revolutionaries Without Revolution*) gave a very particular hue to wider surrealist perspectives; in November 1948 it was precisely for 'fractional activity' that a number of individuals around the painter Victor Brauner were excluded from the Surrealist Group.
13. In practice, at least from 1951 onwards, Breton was probably immune from such denunciation, but this was because, like King Arthur, he had established such prestige in the group that such an action would have been unthinkable. To maintain this prestige, however, Breton's actions remained severely circumscribed within the moral framework that surrealism had established.
14. In *Transformation*, no. 3 (1967), p. 34.
15. Breton, *L'Amour fou* (Paris: Gallimard, 1937), p. 171. This is not to imply that the supreme point is conceived as metaphorical in nature. On the contrary, it is reality in its pure form. But actually to bathe in that pure form would be to renounce the materiality of life, which is essentially imperfect in nature. 'Perfection', as the surrealists always defined it, 'is laziness'.

16. Even arch renegades like Aragon, Éluard or Dalí had no essential ideological differences with surrealism; they rather may be said to have abandoned it, and the antagonism that surrealists have towards them arises from the fact that each was seen to have done so for opportunistic and ignominious reasons. Where genuine ideological differences were apparent (with Navelle, Artaud, Bataille or Caillois, for instance), any rancour seems to have been fairly short-lived.
17. Interview in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 20–26 May 1988, p. 63.
18. José Pierre's *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives 1922–1969* (2 vols, Paris: Le Terrain Vague, 1981) notes the circumstances of authorship wherever details are available; a discussion of the process of the tracts' elaboration is found in the introduction to the book's first volume.
19. Octavio Paz, *Alternating Currents* (London: Wildwood House, 1974), p. 53.
20. Jean Schuster, *The Fourth Canto*, p. 199. Perhaps the best sketch of Breton's personality and particular qualities has been given by Thirion in *Revolutionaries Without Revolution*, pp. 173–4.
21. Aragon quoted by Simon Watson Taylor in the preface to the English translation of *Paris Peasant* (London: Cape, 1968), p. 15.
22. Thirion, *Revolutionaries Without Revolution*, p. 190.
23. The complexity of the Paris group, the fact that it attracted so many people who also had their own agendas or were simply hangers-on, meant that it needed someone to 'guide' it in some way. Other surrealist groups, much smaller and less attractive to potentially disruptive elements, have been far more acephalous; the Czech group for example, the one with most continuity outside Paris, was long associated first with Karel Teige and then Vratislav Effenberger. Neither, however, needed to stamp their personality on it as Breton had.
24. See Pierre, *Tracts surréalistes*, vol. 2, pp. 51–113.
25. Jean Benoît in the surrealist enquiry *Rien ou quoi?* (privately published, March 1970), p. 141.
26. This reached a logical conclusion in the activities of ACTUAL, established in 1982 by many of the leading post-war surrealists, with Jean Schuster as its director, precisely for the purpose of documenting the 'true' heritage of surrealism. In part this was established to counter what was then the admittedly very poor scholarship that passed for surrealist research.
27. It has been said that the expulsion of Max Ernst in 1954, against the view of Breton, was a sign that his authority was not absolute. Contrary to expulsions from the group before the war, usually effected by edict or consensus, this was made by democratic vote, which Jean Schuster has defended as a sign of maturity. But is democracy not incompatible with the sort of society surrealism claimed to be, that is, an elective community? In fact the 'democratic' alibi seems to have been established precisely to camouflage Breton's ultimate authority. While it may be true that Breton, for whatever reason, genuinely did not want to see Ernst expelled, the fact that he was prepared to bow to the majority suggests that he was pleased that the group would take such a decision against his wishes, almost like a father proud of his independent child. But that the expulsion had to be performed in such a high-handed, even bureaucratic, way shows that no one within the group had sufficient authority to take necessary decisions as Breton had previously done. It is perhaps not going too far to suggest that Ernst represented a sort of surrogate victim who could be sacrificed without affecting the cohesion of the group; as such, the real target may have been the group's unresolvable internal tensions.

28. Schuster, *Fourth Canto*, p. 200.
29. It should be recalled that French intellectual life during the fifties and sixties existed in the baleful shadow of the Stalinism of the PCF, a shadow that would only be erased after May '68.

CHAPTER 1

1. Maurice Thorez: leader of the French Communist Party [trans. note].
2. A reference to the exhibition *Surréalisme, sources-histoire-affinités* attacked in *Confronting the Liquidators* [trans. note].
3. Alphonse Rabbe (1786–1829), historian and moralist, author of *L'Album d'une pessimiste*; Georges Darien (1862–1921), author of *Le Voleur* (1895) among other novels [trans. note].
4. *Point de départ surréaliste, 1938–68* (Prague: Československý Spisovatel, 1969).
5. That some or other individual, pleading membership of a group that has since been dissolved, should give their own version of a 'continuity' of surrealism, without claiming to incarnate it, is simply a cultural phenomenon. On the other hand, we cannot fail to mention the singular fact that, in their eighth issue, the authors of an almost homely bulletin sign a text 'The Surrealist Movement'. We simply indicate the incongruity of this provocation as introduced when discussing 'the earth' and 'spirituality', notions which even guaranteed by distance and 'the extent of our means' (they are speaking about American Indians) can only be parochial. Yet, its church warden announces in the adjoining pages the imminent solution of the 'problem of the relationship between art and revolution', thanks to a variant of the telephone game. We invite him to stick to this game, and cease to venture beyond it [this is a reference to the rival Surrealist Group's 'Letter to the American Indian Movement' in *Bulletin de liaison surréaliste*, no. 8 (February 1974) – trans. note].
6. See Norman O. Brown, *Love's Body* (New York: Random House, 1966); Géza Roheim, *The Gates of the Dream* (New York: International Universities Press, 1952). But the latter adds in an allusion to the double function of the dreamer's ego: 'the struggle is eternal, the result ceaselessly placed at stake'.
7. Jürgen Habermas, 'Questions and Counterquestions', *Praxis International*, vol. 4, no. 3 (October 1984), p. 237.
8. Jürgen Habermas, 'Modernity versus Postmodernity', *New German Critique*, no. 22 (winter 1981), p. 11.
9. Breton, 'First Manifesto of Surrealism', in *Manifestos of Surrealism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972), p. 18.
10. André Breton, *Surrealism and Painting* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 4.
11. Habermas, 'Questions and Counterquestions', p. 237.
12. Habermas, 'Modernity versus Postmodernity', p. 10.
13. Breton, 'Second Manifesto of Surrealism', in *Manifestos*, p. 160.
14. André Breton, 'La Lampe dans l'horloge' (1948), in *La Clé des champs* (Paris: Pauvert, 1979), p. 116.
15. Habermas, 'Questions and Counterquestions', p. 237.

CHAPTER 2

1. The same people who criticised the German socialists for not 'fraternising' in 1914 are now shocked when someone encourages soldiers here to break ranks.

The call to desertion, which is a mere act of opinion, is held to be a crime: 'our soldiers' have the right not to be shot in the back. (They also have the right not to be shot in the stomach.)

2. Let's do this image justice. The Orient is everywhere. It represents the conflict between metaphysics and its enemies, which are also the enemies of freedom and contemplation. Even in Europe, who can tell where the Orient is absent? The man you pass in the street has it within him: the Orient is in his consciousness.
3. Spinoza, Kant, Blake, Hegel, Schelling, Proudhon, Marx, Stirner, Baudelaire, Lautréamont, Rimbaud, Nietzsche: this list alone represents the beginning of your disaster.
4. Julien Benda, *Nouvelle Revue Française*, May 1935.
5. We would add that, to the extent that the parties invoking Marxism are led, for tactical reasons, to take, even provisionally, an attitude which hitches them to bourgeois policies, we have radically broken with the direction of these parties.
6. Confederación Nacional del Trabajo, Federación Anarquista Ibérica and Partido de Unificación Marxista [trans. note].
7. Parti Ouvrier Internationaliste [trans. note].
8. According to José Pierre (*Tracts surréalistes*, vol. 1, p. 526), this text was found among the papers of Jacques Brunius.
9. This is a reference to Jean Schuster's essay 'Le sens d'une rencontre', and the response by a group of anarchists 'Le vrai sens d'une rencontre', published in *Le Libertaire* on 7.8.52 and 11.9.52 respectively [trans. note].
10. A reference to articles by Benjamin Péret [trans. note].
11. See Gérard Legrand, 'Rationalisme et raisons de vivre', *Le Libertaire*, 30.11.51.
12. Currently revealing its nature in Egypt, using tried and tested techniques.
13. General Gaston Alexandre Auguste Gallifet (1830–1909) played a notoriously bloodthirsty role in the military suppression of the Paris Commune in 1871 and was known in particular for his cruel and arbitrary policies of summary execution [trans. note].

CHAPTER 3

1. 'Front Rouge' was reproduced in *Misère de la poésie* (1932). An English translation is included in Nadeau, *The History of Surrealism*, pp. 285–95 [trans. note].
2. Whatever our position in this respect, which we maintain unshakably and the circumstances of which it is our most elementary duty to make clear, we think that, even among those who could not recognise it as theirs, there are those who simply on the intellectual and moral value represented in their eyes by Aragon, if not by us, would like to join their protest to ours. We should be grateful if they would return the enclosed sheet bearing their signature and that of their friends.

The indictment of Aragon for his poem 'Red Front', published in the journal *Literature of the World Revolution*, an indictment which exposes him to a punishment of five years in prison, is unprecedented in France. We protest against any attempt to interpret a poetic text for judiciary ends and demand the immediate ending of the prosecutions.

3. André Breton, *Second Manifesto of Surrealism*, p. 127.

4. We learned at the last minute that Jacques Gengoux, a Jesuit candidate, has abandoned the seminary and will not take his vows. [The 'trafficker in lard' is another reference to Claudel – trans. note.]
5. Henri Pastoureau, 'Pour une offensive de grand style contre la civilisation chrétienne', in *Le Surréalisme en 1947* (Paris: Maeght, 1947).
6. Fernando Gamboa and his companion Zaradina Libovitch (alias Suzana Steel, alias Suzana Gamboa), both Stalinists, distinguished themselves in 1939, when they had the confidence of the Stalinist Mexican attaché in Paris, Narcisso Bassols, by preventing, against the instructions of President Cárdenas, the departure by boat for Mexico of non-Stalinist Spanish refugees whom they went as far as bringing back ashore when they had managed to embark. Numerous Spanish refugees owe to them their deportation to Nazi concentration camps where some of them died.
7. Galerie Kléber (and with the participation of Galerie René Drouin & Co) from 15 December 1956 to 5 January 1957.
8. What is more vile than the annexation, under the pretext of *non-figurative works*, of the Picabia who wrote: 'God has only ever cured the sick'? On the same subject, see 'Si Paris valait une messe' by Charles Estienne in *Combat*, 25 March 1957.
9. *La Brèche* was a surrealist journal published from 1961 to 1965. The article referred to is Robert Benayoun's 'Le Crépuscule des bonimenteurs' ('The Twilight of the Smooth Talkers'), *La Brèche*, no. 1 (October 1961), reviewing the book by Bergier and Pauwels [trans. note].
10. See our tracts *Warning Shot* (1957), *Expose the Physicists, Empty the Laboratories!* (1958) and André Breton's response to *Le Figaro Littéraire* regarding Gagarin (April 1960).
11. See his text in the collective work *La Révolte en question* (Paris: Le Soleil Noir, 1951).
12. In fact these are two of the signatories of Marshall Juin's declaration of September 1960: 'It is an imposture to say France is fighting an Algerian people that rose up for their independence, etc.' Since then, Mr Pauwels has appeared on television, as the presenter of Mr Papon, the 'philosopher' Prefect of police: he considers the person responsible for the abject racist attacks currently dishonouring Paris to be his spiritual brother.
13. They receive, for example (p. 142), this type of revelation: 'Raymond Abellio considers Southern California and Tibet as the two spiritual poles of the occult. All one can say, on reading the book by Madame Lindsay, is that Southern California is no doubt stranger than Tibet.'
14. 'Neruda,' Sartre writes, 'is one of the great American poets.' In what capacity can he claim to judge poetry? His essay on Baudelaire no doubt? Enough said. But what does our exegete think about the situation forced on poetry and poets today in Russia, apparent for example in the trial of Joseph Brodsky, judged and condemned for militant parasitism? [...]
15. He regrets in passing that Pasternak, guilty in his eyes of being banned in his own country, had been given the award *before* Sholokov, who is totally submissive to the regime, thereby indicating the 'proper way' to attain the Nobel Prize.
16. Cited in the issue of *L'Arc* examined below as being by Éluard, it is of course from *Notes On Poetry*, a collaborative work between Breton and Éluard. But we'll let that pass.
17. *Les Chants de Maldoror*, chant V.

18. See 'Schnorr & Co', *Bief, Jonction surréaliste*, no. 1 (15 November 1958).
19. This is Aragon, in fact: in 1922 in *Les Écrits Nouveaux*; in 1930 in 'Contribution à l'avortement des études maldoriennes', *Le Surréalisme ASDLR*, no. 2 (October 1930)
20. See 'Lautréamont is not a Hundred' (*Cahiers du Sud*, 1946).
21. Come off it!
22. A baker's dozen.
23. And elsewhere: 'What strange power does he [Ducasse] have in him, so great that in the apparent service of the rule, that it can only humiliate the rule and, behind it, glorify boundless freedom?'
24. Just as in *Les Fleurs du mal*, no doubt: 'Hypocritical reader, my familiar, my friend!'
25. In English in the original [trans. note].
26. It couldn't help but end up with this cliché: the history of China is full of autodafés, linked to changes in the dominant religion or dynasty.
27. The turning of the pages, or what?

CHAPTER 4

1. Chiappe was the Parisian Chief of Police, a hated figure later to be caricatured in Buñuel's *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1963) [trans. note].
2. Marshall Lyautey was a colonial general; Daumesnil a radical deputy and Minister of the Colonies; Doumier was President of the Republic; Paul Bancour was a member of the French delegation at the League of Nations; Jacques Doriot was a communist deputy [trans. note].
3. 'I have to address my regret and sympathy to Your Excellency about the fire at the principal pavilion of the Dutch East Indies, which we had inaugurated together and which was a magnificent testimony to the colonial work of your country.' (Telegram from M. Paul Reynaud to the Netherlands' colonial minister.)
4. See *L'Année missionnaire*, 1931.
5. In an article by Eugène Marsan.
6. If our critique is purely negative here, if we put forward no positive proposals against what we irrevocably condemn, we apologise for the necessity to make a start, something that has not allowed a certain maturity. From the next issue, we hope to develop our ideology of revolt.

APPENDIX 1

1. Let us note however that in a movement like surrealism which has always sought to remain limited in number, the right of tendencies, which would be legitimate in any organisation of a proselytising nature, becomes the right to raise inefficiency to a principle.
2. In the immanent sense of Heraclitus: 'This universe, which is the same for all, has not been made by any god or man. It always has been, is, and will be an ever-living fire, kindling itself by regular measures and going out at regular measures.'
3. See the *First Manifesto of Surrealism*: 'Swift is surrealist in malice, Sade is surrealist in Sadism, Chateaubriand is surrealist in exoticism', and so on.

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