

Communiqué from the SI concerning Vaneigem

9 December 1970¹

Finally obligated to be serious and say something *precise* on what the SI is and what it has to do, Raoul Vaneigem has immediately rejected it in its totality. Up to this point, he had always approved of *everything*.

His 14 November [1970] statement of position² has the ultimate and sad merit of expressing very well, and in a few words, what was at the center of the crisis that the SI went through in 1969-1970. It is obviously upside-down that Vaneigem passionately envisions the truth of this crisis, but he exhibits it exactly and, displayed to this degree of visibility, the inversion is unlikely to interfere with our reading of it.

Vaneigem describes our position³ as “the last abstraction that could be formulated in, for and in the name of the SI”; and, as he never perceived the preceding ones, he wants to combat this one, at least. Thus, here we must speak of the concrete, the abstraction and he who speaks of abstraction.

Since its origin, the concrete terrain of this crisis has equally been a defense of the concreteness of the activity of the SI and of the real conditions in which the SI actually accomplishes this activity. The crisis began when some of us realized and began to make it known that others had surreptitiously allowed them to monopolize the responsibilities to be taken, as well as the largest part of the operations to be executed: the critique that began concerning this under-participation (quantitative and especially qualitative) in the production of our principal communal publications quickly spread to the more hidden under-participation in matters of theory, strategy, meetings and external struggles, and even in day-to-day discussions of the simplest decisions that fell upon us. What could be found everywhere was a fraction composed of *contemplative* comrades, systematically approving and never manifesting anything other than the firmest stubbornness in maintaining inactivity. They behaved as if they estimated that they had nothing to win, but perhaps something to lose, by putting forth a personal opinion or charging themselves with working, by themselves, on any of our *specific* problems. This position, of which self-assured silence was the principal weapon, also covered itself – on its days of celebration – with several general and always very euphoric proclamations of the perfect equality realized in the SI, the radical coherence of its dialogue, and the collective and personal grandeur of all of the participants. Up to the end, Vaneigem remained the most remarkable representative of this sort of practice.

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² That is to say, his letter of resignation from the SI.

³ The “Déclaration” issued by Guy Debord, René Riesel and René Viénet on 11 November 1970, which concludes with the sentence, “Considering that the crisis has reached a threshold of extreme seriousness, and according to Article 8 of the statutes voted upon in Venice [at the VIIIth Conference of the SI], we hereafter reserve the right to make our positions known outside of the SI.”

When several months of discussions and very precise texts had carried the critique of this deficiency to a degree at which none of the implicated individuals could any longer believe – honestly, without deluding themselves – that they could still maintain the illusion among their comrades, Vaneigem more than any other took refuge in silence. It was only in learning, on 11 November, that our positions would henceforth be made known outside of the SI that he immediately estimated that he could no longer remain in it.

Having arrived at this point, Vaneigem makes allusion to “more or less skillful and always odious tactical maneuvers” on our part. He obviously will not make anyone believe that it would have been necessary to have a tactic, to be more or less skillful, or to maneuver in any kind of manner to obligate a comrade – who for many years has been a member of an organization that always affirmed itself to be egalitarian – to actually participate in the decisions of this organization and in their execution, or even to quickly avow that he cannot and does not want to participate any longer. The absence and silence of Vaneigem, or others, could no doubt disguise themselves for quite a long time by using more or less petty maneuvers, but find themselves eliminated quite easily as soon as someone (it doesn’t matter who) announces that he no longer wants to support them,⁴ whereas the contemplative position must, on its side, agree that it truly wants nothing other in the world than to continue to be supported among us. But Vaneigem used the plural, which evokes a past in which such maneuvers – “always odious” – were not aimed at him or his current imitators. We will not content ourselves with recalling that Vaneigem – who was never opposed, neither in writing nor at a single meeting, nor even, to our knowledge, in any personal discussion with any member of the SI, to any of these so-called “maneuvers,” never evoking in any manner their existence or their possibility – was inexcusably and miserably an *accomplice* of them. Naturally, we will go further: before the judgment of all the revolutionaries who already exist today, we formally challenge him to immediately identify *a single one* of these “tactical maneuvers” that he had found out about, and let pass, in the SI, during the ten years in which he was a member.

Vaneigem, who feigns to believe that the SI will disappear because his absence must make it retreat (“would still like to save a group,” “to reconstitute the French section”), mentions that he didn’t know how to make this group “anything approaching what he really wanted it to be.” We certainly do not doubt that Vaneigem wanted to make the SI an organization, not only revolutionary, but also of a sublime and perhaps even absolute excellence (cf. *Traité de savoir-vivre*,⁵ etc.). Over the years, other comrades have said that the real historical success of the SI would not, all the same, go very far, and especially too often allowed *avoidable* faults (their existence moreover rendering all the more unfortunate the myth of the admirable perfection of the SI, with which hundreds of stupid external spectators – and unfortunately several spectators among us – have gargled). But Vaneigem, in now adopting, *post festum*, the tone of a disabused leader, who had not “known” how to make this group “anything” of what he would have liked it to be, forgets to pose this cruel question: what did *he* ever say, or do, by arguing or setting an example, so that the SI would become even better or closer to the superior personal tastes that he *proclaimed* to have? Vaneigem did *nothing* to attain such goals; although, meanwhile, the SI truly didn’t remain *nothing*! Before the obvious evidence of what the SI *has done*, for any individual who knows how to think, Vaneigem today completely discredits himself by launching,

⁴ See “On the functioning of the French section of the SI,” a letter from Debord to the members of the French section dated 15 October 1969.

⁵ Known as *The Revolution of Everyday Life* in English.

so childishly, the sullen and burlesque counter-truth of the complete failure of the SI and of himself in particular. Vaneigem has never wanted to recognize *a single bit* of failure in the actions of the SI, precisely because he knew that he was too intimately tied to this bit of failure; and because his real deficiencies have constantly appeared to him to call for, as remedies, not their supersession, but simple peremptory affirmations that *everything* was for the best. Now that he can no longer continue, the failure of which he must admit the existence is suddenly and bluntly presented, against all probability, as total failure, the absolute nonexistence of our theory and our action in the last ten years. This bad joke judges him.

In this basic buffoonery, the only thing that appears as a particularly pleasant detail is Vaneigem's very sociological-journalistic allusion to the "slight penetration of situationist theory into the worker milieu," and especially his sudden *discovery* – made in the unexpected light of the Last Judgment of the SI, initiated in his eyes by his departure – that none of the situationists work in a factory! Because, if Vaneigem had known this sooner, since it appears to have affected him so much, he would certainly have indicated the problem and some radical solution to it.

On this score, it is necessary to recall that Vaneigem, when he was serious, didn't simply enunciate the admirable goals that he reserved for the SI. The one among us who spoke the most abundantly of himself, his subjectivity, and his "taste for radical pleasure," also had admirable goals *for himself*. But has he realized them, has he even concretely struggled to realize them? Not at all. For Vaneigem, as for the SI, Vaneigem's *program* was only formulated to save himself from all the fatigue and all the small historical risks of its *realization*. The goal being total, it was only envisioned in a pure present: it was *already here* as a whole, as long as one believed that one could make people believe it, or it remained quite inaccessible; one never succeeded in defining it or in approaching it. The qualitative, like the spirit of table turning,⁶ has made one believe that it was here, but it is necessary to admit that this was only an extended error! Vaneigem finally discovered that the fairytale in which he feigned to take great pleasure did not take shape.

In such a metaphysical light, one can certainly wait for the pure moment of the Revolution and, in this relaxing expectation, leave to it "the care of recognizing its own" (but it will nevertheless be necessary that its own knows how to recognize the Revolution, and, for example, cancel their reservations for their vacations, if by misfortune the two phenomena happen to coincide).⁷ Meanwhile, when it concerns questions more immediately close to our consciousness and direct action, such as the SI and Vaneigem in person, if one pretends that all that is wanted is already totally realized, then mystique degenerates into *bluster*. What one has affirmed to be perfect, one must one day be affirmed to be totally nonexistent. A joyous discovery, which affected none of the completely extra-historical radicalism of Vaneigem. Thus, in recognizing today his total error about the SI, Vaneigem doesn't realize that he has already implicitly recognized a total error about himself. He believes he is still in 1961, ten years having passed like a simple dream, this negligible nightmare of history, after which Vaneigem once

⁶ An allusion to Marx's comments about the commodity in *Das Kapital*: "The form of wood, for instance, is altered if a table is made out of it. Nevertheless, the table continues to be wood, an ordinary, sensuous thing. But as soon as it emerges as a commodity, it changes into a thing that transcends sensuousness. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than if it were to begin dancing [*umdrehen*] of its own free will."

⁷ An allusion to Vaneigem's absence from Paris during the first-half of May 1968.

again finds his project, simply and purely “postponed,” always equal to itself, of “absolutely re-making (his) own coherence.” Yet, if the SI hadn’t existed, then Vaneigem himself still doesn’t exist. But one day, perhaps soon? Coherence can wait!⁸ But since historical justice – as much as real action in history – is foreign to Vaneigem’s preoccupations, he doesn’t do justice to himself.

In the history of the SI, Vaneigem occupied an important and unforgettable place. In 1961, having joined the theoretico-practical platform constituted in the first years of the SI, he immediately shared and developed the most extreme positions, those that were *then* the most novel and that *were heading towards* the revolutionary coherence of our times. If, at that moment, the SI’s contribution to Vaneigem certainly wasn’t negligible – it gave him the opportunity, the dialogue, several basic theses and the terrain of activity on which to become what he wanted and could authentically be, profoundly radical – it is also true that Vaneigem made a very remarkable contribution to the SI: he had plenty of intelligence and culture, a great boldness of ideas, and all this dominated by the truest anger towards existing conditions. Vaneigem had genius then, because he knew perfectly to go to the extreme in everything that he was able to do. And all that he wasn’t able to do, he simply had not yet had the opportunity to confront personally. He burned to get started. In the years 1961-1964 – and this is a period that was important for the SI as well as for the ideas of modern revolution – the SI was strongly marked by Vaneigem, perhaps more so than by any other. It was in this period that he not only wrote the *Treatise* and other texts that bore his signature in the journal *Internationale Situationniste* (“Basic Banalities,” etc.), but also participated deeply in the writing of the anonymous collective texts in issues 6 through 9 of this journal, and [participated] very creatively in all of the discussions of this era. If he forgets all this now, we do not. If today he wants to spit in his own plate, so much the worse, because the revolutionary generation that formed in the subsequent years had already been served from it.

This period, at the beginning of the 1960s, saw the general formulation of the most total revolutionary program. Revolution, of which we announced the return and the new demands, was then totally absent, as much from truly modern theory as from individuals and groups concretely struggling in the proletariat, using new radical actions and seeking new objectives. A certain generality, a certain abstraction, sometimes even the usage of the tone of lyrical excess, were the inevitable products of these precise conditions and even found themselves to be necessary, justified, excellent. We weren’t many at that moment, and Vaneigem was there, knowing and daring to say what we said. We did well.

Quite fortunately, the development of modern society did not fail to more or less obviously follow the road that we saw it take it; and at the same time the new revolutionary current, which, as a corollary, did not fail to manifest itself, reprised much of our critique, partially armed itself with our theory (which obviously continued to develop and make itself more specific), and even was inspired by certain examples of our practical struggles. It was necessary for us to make more precise *analyses*, and also to experiment with the diverse forms of action then becoming possible. The situationists, along with their era, entered into more and more concrete struggles that deepened until 1968, and still more since then. [But] Vaneigem was already no longer there.

“How,” he asks himself today, “did what had been enthralling in the awareness of a communal project become transformed into an unease at being in each other’s company?” But *he is careful not to answer* his question, which thus remains purely elegiac. How did pure gold

⁸ “*Demain, on raser la cohérence gratis!*” (Tomorrow we will destroy coherence for free!)

change into base lead? In this case, quite simply because the awareness of a communal project ceased to exist in a communal practice – in what *became* the communal practice of the SI. Certain members lived the practice of the SI, with its difficulties and inconveniences, of which the worst was certainly having to struggle against the [lead] heaviness introduced into our communal activity by the contemplative and self-admiring tendency of several situationists (cf. “The Questions of Organization for the SI,” a text from April 1968, reprinted in *I.S.* #12). On the contrary, Vaneigem only maintained the pure “consciousness” of the abstract generality of this project; and thus, to the extent that this concrete action widened, his consciousness became ever more outmoded and mendacious, a false consciousness on the so-called terrain of communal historic consciousness, simple bad faith. In these conditions, it was less and less interesting to meet Vaneigem (and others who had *never* been interesting to anyone). It didn’t please anyone to go on vainly repeating the same critiques, which had become boring. And, over the years, it was surely even more boring and annoying for Vaneigem to meet, in a completely changed situation, comrades who, he knew quite well, knew his shortcomings *almost as well as he himself knew them*. Nevertheless, Vaneigem preferred to continue to appear among us formally, leaning upon memories of an authentic participation and the always more remote and more abstract promise of a future accomplishment, playing on the quite cold remnants of an amicable dialogue, and turning a deaf ear. As Président de Brosses⁹ wrote concerning a personality of this type: “One cannot decide to be annoyed with a colleague, with a very amiable and sweet man who never responds to anything one says to him. The trouble is that sweet spirits are the most stubborn and insensitive of all. They never contest you. But one cannot persuade them or influence them.”

Over the course of the years 1965-1970, the disappearance of Vaneigem manifested itself quantitatively (he hardly ever participated in our publications, except for the three short articles that he signed in the last three issues of *I.S.*¹⁰ and he was often absent from meetings [and when he did attend] he generally kept quiet) and especially qualitatively. His very rare interventions in our debates were stamped by signs of the greatest incapacity to envision concrete historical struggles and pocked with the poorest loopholes concerning the maintenance of any relationship between what one said and what one did, and even with a smiling forgetfulness of dialectical thought. At the VIIth Conference of the SI in 1966, it was necessary to argue for two hours against a strange proposition Vaneigem made: he was certain that our “coherence” would, *in any debate on a practical action to be undertaken*, and after an in-depth discussion, always indicate the only correct path to take, unequivocally recognizable from the start. With the result that, if a minority of situationists, at the end of such a discussion, didn’t declare themselves to be totally convinced, they had thus proved that they didn’t possess the coherence of the SI or that they had dishonestly hidden goals of committing sabotage, or at least a hidden theoretico-practical opposition. If the other comrades obviously defended the rights and duties of any minority in a revolutionary organization – with a hundred concrete examples – and even more simply the rights of reality, it must be recognized that, later on, Vaneigem never risked contradicting himself *on this point* by never finding himself, even for ten minutes, in the perilous situation of being in the “minority” on any question debated by the SI. At the end of 1968, we recognized, against the advice of Vaneigem, the right to constitute tendencies in the SI if need be. Vaneigem

⁹ Charles de Brosses, *Lettres familières d’Italie: lettres écrites d’Italie en 1739 et 1740*.

¹⁰ “Some Theoretical Topics that Need to be Dealt With without Academic Debate or Idle Speculation,” *I.S.* 10, March 1966; “Aiming for Practical Truth,” *I.S.* 11, October 1967; and “Notice to the Civilized Concerning Generalized Self-Management,” *I.S.* 12, September 1969.

gladly rallied himself to the majority opinion, but nevertheless indicated that he could not even conceive how a tendency could ever come into existence among us. In the spring of 1970, when a tendency formed itself to quickly and clearly resolve a practical conflict,¹¹ Vaneigem, of course, immediately joined it. It is useless to multiply examples.

This permanent refusal to envision a real historical development, which was the product of his awareness and *his acceptance* of a relative personal incapacity (which thus increased), was accompanied – as was normal with Vaneigem – by an enthusiastic insistence on any caricature of the totality, in the revolution as in the SI, on the magical fusion, one day, of a spontaneity finally liberated (for the masses and for Vaneigem personally) with coherence: in such a wedding of identifications, the common problems of real society and real revolution would be instantaneously abolished *even before one had the displeasure of considering them*, which is obviously an amiable perspective for the philosophy of history at the end of a banquet. Vaneigem handled the concept of the qualitative by the ton, by resolutely forgetting what Hegel, in *The Science of Logic*, called “the most profound and most essential quality,” which is *contradiction*. “For as against contradiction, identity is merely the determination of the simple immediate, of dead being; but contradiction is the *root of all movement and vitality*; it is only in so far as something has a contradiction within it that it moves, has an urge and activity.” Vaneigem, except at the beginning, didn’t love the life of the SI, but loved its dead image, which was a glorious alibi for his ordinary life and a totally abstract hope for the future. Seeing that Vaneigem was quite comfortable with such a phantom, one understands how he could totally disperse it with a single breath, exactly on 14 November 1970, when it became necessary for him to begin to express his dissatisfaction, because taking the side of satisfied silence was no longer tenable.

We certainly aren’t insinuating that Vaneigem had “secret intentions.” Our *Déclaration* of 11 November is far from being devoted to Vaneigem alone; and he knows quite well that the American situationists had just addressed to us, in the space of several days, *three letters that completely contradicted each other*, none of which cited or corrected the preceding one, which obligated us, in this case, to formulate the hypothesis of the “hidden aims” of these comrades, because we did not for an instant believe in their mental debility. But the conduct of Vaneigem among us had always been known by all, and was of an incontestable, *miserable visibility*. The question – dwindling as time went on – was whether what, in the SI, had so many times merited critique or laughter at Vaneigem’s expense would finally be surmounted or would last up until the end. One now knows the answer. Neither Vaneigem, nor any one else, was taken by surprise by a debate in which several texts – about which no one had ever expressed reservations – had, over the course of several months, affirmed that the debate was decisive, that its conclusion was urgent, that each member had to know that our communal action was entirety at stake. Vaneigem never had anything to fear from this “critique in good faith that one has so often seen displayed after the fact.” Here, incidentally, his irony is inopportune, because we know well that, in the SI, there have been several cases of sudden and surprising breaks, where the explication of an individual’s behavior has only become clear after the fact. We know even better that one of the rare exercises of Vaneigem’s radicalism had *always* been his approval of the SI’s exclusions as soon as they happened and his trampling without regret upon individuals who, the night before, he’d not bothered to critique. And what actually is the meaning of this anti-historical rage against “after the fact” judgments of what has caused the event? Must we not, for example, respond to

¹¹ See the letter addressed by all sections of the SI by Debord, Eduardo Rothe and Christian Sébastiani, dated 14 February 1970.

the criticisms that Vaneigem accumulated in his text of 14 November? He never breathed a word of them beforehand. Here, we are quite obligated to critique *after the fact* a precise manifestation of a lack of unawareness, which we would have been quite reckless to predict in all of its details before Vaneigem made his final grand gesture.

“The coherence of critique and the critique of incoherence are one and the same movement, condemned to destroy itself and congeal into ideology the moment that separation is introduced between the different groups in a federation, between individuals in an organization, and between the theory and practice of a member of this organization” (Vaneigem, in *I.S.* #11). One couldn’t say it better; and one could hardly denounce with greater impudence, in abstract universality, the very fault from which one suffers, so as to make it believed that, *since one has denounced it precisely* in general and everywhere, one will be necessarily exempt from it. Vaneigem wasn’t unaware that, in the last analysis, his comrades would not *cover up* an imposture of this kind, even if excellent memories, and the remains of an indulgent friendship founded upon them, could delay for some time the conclusion that the least amount of lucidity would impose, at first in all the details and then at the very center of the problem. We don’t have to pretend to ourselves that we are sure of anything or of anyone. We are only sure of the movement of history, insofar that we know how to recognize it by participating in it; and, without doubt, insofar as each one of us can recognize it in himself and is *capable of proving it*. In any case, it is obvious that the real and necessary *complicity* in an enterprise such as the SI isn’t founded on a community of defects or on the “communal project” of dazzling from afar a multitude of followers, by the insipid and foolish image of our collective splendor: we have always been in complete agreement in rejecting these people and denouncing this image, but it is not possible to really accomplish this effort thoroughly when, *even in the SI*, this attitude of vague and soft effusion, this *piety of the SI*, exists in fact, without even having the excuse of ignorant distance. We have thus allowed the comfortably optimistic notion of the *complementarity* of the participants, “without other proof,” to affirm itself in too exaggerated a manner. Each finds himself and no one loses himself, since several specialties have their place in the sun: the Chamfort¹² of the totality, the loyal drunkard, the thrower of paving stones of excellent intentions, etc. It is here that absence becomes a politics of peaceful co-existence, and approbation becomes a necessity that passes itself off as happenstance. And it is here that Vaneigem has disappointed the most, if not himself – he has experienced others – then at least his comrades.

How could the contemplative situationists think – no matter how true their good will was – they could struggle against the hierarchical follower-ism that is manifest *around the SI*, which we have so strongly rejected and condemned, when they themselves were in fact followers *in the SI*, but adorned with an abstract and proclaimed intention to be engaged egalitarian participation? At this moment, scorn for exterior followers in fact becomes *an imaginary confirmation of internal equality*. But we must understand this “follower-ism” in its real complexity. Neither Vaneigem nor the others were servile approvers of a politics that they have in fact disapproved of: it is only Vaneigem’s last text that, very unjustly, gives this image of himself. In reality, Vaneigem and the other comrades had always followed the decisions taken in the practice of the SI because they have truly approved of them and, we dare say – as long as revolutionaries more coherent than us, or placed in more favorable conditions than we are, who have comprehended

¹² Sébastien-Roch Nicolas Chamfort (1741-1794) was a French writer who was famous for his witty epigrams.

the strategy that we have followed and others that might have been possible, haven't perceived our veritable errors – *because they were good for our communal project*. Vaneigem, always very firm against our enemies, has, in the last ten years, never done or envisioned doing anything opposed to the radicalism of the avowed action of the SI. He has only *contributed very badly* to the exercise of this radicalism. Vaneigem seems to have never wanted to face the simple fact that he who speaks so well commits himself to *being there a little* in a number of analyses and practical struggles, under pain of being radically deceptive. Neither the vehemence nor the real perspectives of the SI, insofar as it is a half-community, could discharge the obligation for him to manifest his own on diverse, concrete occasions. The distance that Vaneigem had, for a long time, taken with respect to our action hid from him many of the relationships, which in reality were hierarchical, that existed in this action and which his evasive attitude accepted and encouraged. But this same distance was precisely taken so as to *not see* this reality, instead of aiding the effort to surmount it. After having placed his trust in the SI as the radical guarantee of the personal life that he had accepted, he came to be in the SI as he was in his own life.

Thus, the *Treatise on Living* is part of a current of agitation of which the last has not been heard and part of a movement from which its author has departed. He has spoken so as not to be. Nevertheless, the importance of this book does not escape anyone, because (over time) no one, not even Vaneigem, could escape its conclusions. As Vaneigem let the old world tread on his feet, the project in which he believed became *exorcism*, a vulgar sacralization of an everyday routine that, recognizing at every moment the extremely unsatisfying character of what he accepted, had all the more need to construct for itself an independent empire in the clouds of a spectacular radicalism.

It is the totality that consoles, alas, and sustains he who has decided to endure everything in every detail, even by affecting to find almost everything to be very good. Apart from his opposition, affirmed once and for all, to the commodity, the State, hierarchy, alienation and survival, Vaneigem is quite obviously someone who has never been opposed *to anything* in the specific life that has been made for him, his entourage and his associates – including, finally, his associates in the SI. This strange timidity has prevented him from confronting what displeases him, but obviously not from feeling it sharply. He defends himself by traveling, by dividing his life into several permanent hourly and geographical sectors, between which he is left with a kind of railway freedom. Thus he consoles himself for a certain number of displeasures that he experiences everywhere by committing several miniscule acts of revenge for his often ridiculed radical importance, by engaging in small childish insolences, all likeably covered over with a gentle smile: by making people wait a little, by forgetting several times a very small detail for which he was responsible, by missing some meetings, by making himself, he believes, desired. It is in these things that he slightly compensates for the unhappy awareness of not having truly become Vaneigem, of having constantly withdrawn from adventure and even discomfort, and also from the search for the high-quality attributes of people and moments; in brief, of not having done what he wants, after having said it so well.

Of the disastrous separation between theory and practice – which his whole life illustrates, to the point of having rapidly sterilized his capacities as a theoretician – without doubt nothing could be a more striking example than the following anecdote. On 15 May 1968, Vaneigem, having only arrived the night before, co-signed the circular “From the SI in Paris to the other members of the SI; to comrades who have declared themselves in agreement with our theses,” which called for immediate action on the most radical bases of what would become, in the following two or three days, the occupations movement. This circular analyzed the unfolding

of the first days of May, indicated where we were (notably with respect to the Sorbonne Occupation Committee), and envisioned the imminent possibilities of repression and even the possibility of a “social revolution.” The first factory had been occupied the previous day and, at that time, the most imbecilic member of the most backward groupuscule didn’t doubt that a very serious social crisis had begun. Nevertheless, Vaneigem, who was much better informed, as soon as he affixed his signature to our circular, boarded a train that very afternoon to return to the location of his Mediterranean vacation, postponed for a long time. Several days later, after learning while abroad, from the *mass media*,¹³ what had continued as foreseen in France, he naturally found it his duty to return, traversing with great difficulty the country, which was on strike, and rejoined us a week after his ridiculous blunder, that is, when the decisive days, during which we could have done the most for the movement, had already passed. Therefore, we know well that Vaneigem truly loves revolution, and that it isn’t courage that he lacks. We thus can only understand these facts as the limiting-case of the separation between a rigorous routine of an unshakably orderly everyday life and a real but greatly disarmed passion for revolution.

Now that the alibi of the SI has been withdrawn from Vaneigem, and given that he continues to proudly announce the objective of perfecting his coherence on foot and in cars, alone and “with the greatest number,” he must wait for all those who will associate themselves with him and will not be stupid enough – which will be a minority, without doubt – to ask him, at one time or another, *how, where, by doing what and by struggling for which precise perspectives* he will henceforth put in play his famous radicalism and his remarkable “taste for pleasure.” The likeable silence that speaks volumes on the mysteries of the SI will no longer suffice; and his responses to these questions will be full of interest.

We have here responded seriously to what clearly no longer exists. This is because we continue to occupy ourselves with the theoretical tasks and the practical conduct of the SI, and because, in this single perspective, all this has importance. An era has ended. It is this change, and not our bad mood or our impatience, that has obligated us to settle a state of affairs, to break with a certain situationist conservatism that has for too long demonstrated its inertia and its pure will for self-reproduction. We no longer want with us, neither Vaneigem, nor those who still aspire to imitate him, nor other comrades whose participation can almost completely be summarized as a formalist game in the organization, hollow exchanges of letters “between sections” concerning trifles, false nuances and interpretations that are sustained and withdrawn, from one continent to another, sometimes six months later, concerning simple decisions taken in ten minutes by all those who, being there, have direct experience of the question – while the participation of these same comrades in our theory and real activity is reduced to something nearly imperceptible. The revolutionaries who are not members of the SI – without stiffly draping themselves in the “quality” of being a situationist – have done much more to diffuse our theory (and even, several times already, to develop it) than several immobilized “situationists.” We will prove once again that we will not play at being *the leadership* of the new revolutionary current, by shattering as precisely as possible the derisory myth of the SI, inside as well as outside of it. Today as before, the real activity of the SI pleases us more. And the reality of the revolutionary era into which we have entered is even more *our veritable victory*.

At the moment, in an out-of-date university style, Vaneigem affects to want to let “the historians” judge the action of which he has taken part. Among other things, he thus has forgotten that it isn’t “historians” who judge, but history, that is to say, those who make it. As

¹³ English in original.

long as they haven't been eaten alive (as one of our friends from long ago once said), the professional historians only follow. And so, on this question as on so many others, the historians will only confirm the judgment of the SI.

Guy Debord¹⁴

¹⁴ *Footnote by Alice Debord:* This communiqué would be co-signed by René Viénet.