

Letter from Guy Debord to Daniel Blanchard

13 June 1961¹

Dear Daniel:²

I believe, as you have written, that the SI draws closer to being a real (complete) revolutionary enterprise. The most recent members are very encouraging in this regard. This has even gone as far as overthrowing the equilibrium of the German section, which has long been our nightmare. Last week, at the moment that the German journal was supposed to have come out in Munich, it was seized at the printer for the following reasons: violation of the fundamental laws [of Germany], incitement to revolution, pornography, blasphemy, perversion of youth and offense to the personalities of the Church. It was about unitary urbanism.

After several exclusions (or resignations) that are already recognized or to be expected, we aren't without hope of soon being disencumbered of the aesthetes and jokers.

In July [1961], we will publish the next issue of the French journal. I think it will be more interesting than its predecessor.

As for S[ocialisme] ou B[arbarie], things go less well on certain sides. The article by Chatel³ is a mere detail, although truly idiotic. As you know, I immediately defended our positions in another text, "For a Revolutionary Judgment of Art,"⁴ which has not met a very large response on the "official" side of the organization, but which has circulated well enough in manuscript. Moreover, Chatel quit the organization shortly afterwards, and the polemic is over. The true difficulty, which is central and strongly felt by almost everyone, is the one the group experiences in moving to the superior stage of action that it has defined, in transforming itself into an effective revolutionary organization (it already possesses the theoretical base and a good number of sufficiently conscious militants), by breaking with the appearance of a "circle of specialized intellectual discussions" that corresponds to a now surpassed stage, but which has left behind oppressive habits. Which renders it less demanding concerning the contestation of the oppressive habits that the whole of social life imposes on us everywhere.

¹ Published in *Guy Debord, Correspondance*, Volume 2, septembre 1960 – décembre 1964 (Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2001). Translated by Bill Brown and uploaded to the *NOT BORED!* website (notbored.org) in 2005. All footnotes by Alice Debord, except where noted.

² Alias P. Canjuers. [*Translator*: co-author with Guy Debord of "Preliminaries Towards Defining a Unitary Revolutionary Program," 20 July 1960].

³ Sébastien Chatel, pseudonym of Sébastien de Diesbach, a member of Socialisme ou Barbarie. [*Translator*: de Diesbach's "A bout de souffle" was published in *Socialisme ou Barbarie* #31 December 1960-February 1961.]

⁴ In which it is noted: "Drafted in February 1961 after the appearance of S. Chatel's critique of [Jean-Luc Godard's] 'Breathless.' This text aims to begin a discussion inside the *Pouvoir Ouvrier* organization, at the same moment that comrades in the Situationist International have been engaged in communal work with *Pouvoir Ouvrier*. We specify that G.-E. Debord is a member of the Situationist International."

On this question, I have been led to withdraw from the field of relations with that organization (copy of my letter enclosed).⁵ But understand well that I remain as close a sympathizer as possible.

Moreover, three situationists are in the Belgian *Pouvoir Ouvrier* group. In Paris, I remain in quite close contact with five or six of the young militants who constitute, to my mind, the most advanced tendency of the French part of the organization – this can hardly be fixed in the classical terms of political opposition, but let us say that, if Vega⁶ represents the conservation of a certain theoretical antiquity in *Pouvoir Ouvrier*, the comrades of whom I speak obviously base themselves upon the texts by Chaulieu-Cardan,⁷ though without appreciating the centrist (or “presidential”) position that is generally that of Barjot⁸ in the everyday life of the organization.

The existence of this (in fact, very recent) current certainly isn’t the sole encouraging point in the developments, numerical or otherwise, of *Pouvoir Ouvrier* since autumn [1960]. To cite only the English group, there are workers and a capacity for collective action that are entirely admirable.

Your absence has surely made it harder to have discussions that are essential. If you had been in Paris in April-May [1961], I think that certain positions would have been more easily understood inside the French part of the organization. One will understand them later on.

Are you returning this summer? We will be very happy to see you, Michèle [Bernstein] and I. The others, too.

Cordially yours,
Guy

⁵ Letter of 5 May 1961. [*Translator*: “To the participants in the national conference of *Pouvoir Ouvrier*.”]

⁶ *Translator*: Alberto Vega.

⁷ Two of Cornelius Castoriadis’ pseudonyms.

⁸ Another of Castoriadis’ pseudonyms.