

# Declaration: On the Charges Brought Against the Situationist International in Germany<sup>1</sup>

In June 1961, the publication of issue #5 of the journal *Spur*, the organ of the German section of the SI, was delayed for several weeks due to pressure from the police and para-judicial forces. The printer refused to let the journal come out due to warnings from the judicial authorities in Munich. This issue was specially dedicated to the situationist theory of unitary urbanism. But these warnings and threats concerned its alleged offenses to the Church, pornography and the corruption of the young, as well as incitements to subversion and violations of constitutional law. Due to the strong attitude of the German situationists, the journal was finally published without triggering official opposition.

At the beginning of November [1961], the publication of issue #6 – which reviewed these incidents and took the occasion to loudly reaffirm the authors' lack of respect for Catholic dogma and morals – caused the nationwide seizure of all six issues of *Spur* and the opening of an investigation into claims of pornography and blasphemy. These accusations were based on little details gathered together from the back issues, and especially the sixth one; several phrases were isolated from their original contexts with systematic disregard for their theoretical content and artistic and cultural positions, while it was obviously that very content that was at the origin of the extravagant obstacles that the authorities decided to place in front of its publishers. In addition, five German situationists were charged because, on 9 November [1961], they'd published and distributed a tract<sup>2</sup> that had been co-signed by all the members of the SI and that called for solidarity from artists and intellectuals in the defense of at least a minimal amount of freedom of expression.

The first trial took place on 4 May 1962, and four people responsible for the *Spur* journal (Kunzelmann, Prem, Sturm and Zimmer) received a suspended sentence of five and a half months in prison. Meanwhile, these comrades, who were partisans of a more moderate attitude where other issues were concerned, were obligated to leave the SI.<sup>3</sup> It goes without saying that we remain in complete solidarity with them in this affair and that we must, in any case, denounce the maneuvers that aim at discrediting avant-garde artists by presenting them as specialized pornographers, despite both the truth and probability of the thing.

This coming 5 July, at 3 pm, the separate trial of Uwe Lausen, a member of the Central Council of the SI and an editor of the journal *Der Deutsche Gedanke* (the new organ of the Situationist International in Germany), will begin at the Hall of Justice in Munich (Pacellistrasse #2, room 607/VI). There are several aggravating circumstances in Uwe Lausen's case. A minor

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<sup>1</sup> “Déclaration: sur les process contre l'Internationale Situationniste en Allemagne Federale,” translated by NOT BORED! 22 January 2015.

<sup>2</sup> *Flugblatt*, signed by Sturm, Fischer, Zimmer, Kunzelmann and Prem, and co-signed by 31 other people, most of them situationists.

<sup>3</sup> Excluded 11 February 1962, announced by the publication of *Nicht Hinauslehnen*, which was signed by Debord, Kotányi, Lausen and Vaneigem.

at the time of the alleged offenses, he faces at least a year of imprisonment in “reform school.”<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the support of the German and international cultural milieus – which was fortunately manifested in the case of the former situationists and which certainly contributed to their defense – has already been expressly refused for Uwe Lausen to the extent that, as a current member of the SI and as someone undergoing the greatest radicalization, he appears to be outside and an enemy of the traditional cultural milieu.

The negligible pretext for these legal proceedings, and the laughable character of the repression, must not make us lose sight of the general meaning of the affair: in addition to the clear symptoms of a focused and menacing surveillance of everything that, in West Germany, shows the slightest tendency towards non-conformism in behavior and in the enunciation of ideas, there is the fact that the SI finds itself placed in a very difficult position concerning the continuation of its activities in the country: censorship that is vigilant despite its aberrant disguises, and imprisonment of the members who don't let themselves be intimidated.

This aspect of our difficulties can't be envisioned independently from an analysis of the other methods by which the SI is being combatted in other geographical sectors by the diverse forces tasked with the maintenance of the old cultural order and the construction [*l'aménagement*] of life. For example, at the same time, we in France are at a stage in which silence about the SI has been organized, principally by the guard dogs of the Leftist intelligentsia. And in the Scandinavian countries and, to a lesser extent, in Holland, we are at the stage of cynically organized falsification. This is propagated through sustained journalistic agitation (so-called “situationism” has become a subject for the sentimental women's magazines as well as an indefinable object of artistic sales) and through the multiplication of para-situationists of all kinds, hastily gathered from the trashcans of failed avant-gardes (the pre-SI era was fertile ground for the production of nullities). For the moment, they come together in the Swedish Bauhaus or around confused [*confusionnistes*] journals to popularize the label of a situationist movement that has been “enlarged” according to their own acuity and their studies of the market. These people claim they are in agreement with all the SI's theses, apparently being incapable of advancing any others or of even understanding them clearly enough to criticize a single one, but the SI doesn't want them and the noise they make about their possibilities of rallying to the SI, about conversations and contacts that are still on-going, are and will always be pure lies. The legal proceedings in Munich have given and will no doubt continue to give many of these confusionists the occasion to present themselves as close to the SI on a matter in which agreement is easy to find among all the artists attached to the most summary freedom, but we consider them to be enrolled in the militia of reigning values, and we know that they will try to liquidate us through confusion and seduction as well as intimidation and boycotts.

Even if the SI attracts the flies of old modern art, or the attention of the judges in Munich, it will make no concessions. Our means of riposte must be chosen according to circumstances, but always in the perspective of the unity of all battles: in German, it might be a suitable degree of clandestinity; the discipline and firmness of the SI, which have already been proven, will no doubt suffice to defeat the falsifiers.

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<sup>4</sup> He was eventually sentenced to three weeks of imprisonment, a fact that led to the publication of *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur (à propos de la condamnation du situationniste Uwe Lausen)*, a tract in French signed on 16 July 1962 by Debord and Vaneigem on behalf of the SI. In translation here: <http://www.notbored.org/discontent.html>.

It is clear that we have not feigned surprise or indignation when faced with these diverse forms of resistance, which are to be expected; instead they have prepared us for their becoming worse everywhere. Yet their growth will, at the same time and due to the same cause, be accompanied by the growth of our own forces: the novelty of the questions that we raise and their obvious relevance. We are still only an avant-garde: others will arrive. We are a nightmare that the sleep of culture will not shake off. We refer the world to our image.

We ask that all the sections of the SI translate and publish this declaration; and that our comrades adhere to our perspectives and distribute information about this affair as widely as possible. We ask everyone to support Uwe Lausen as soon as possible, as much through public declarations that could be useful during his trial as through forms of practical aid that could help the continuation of the SI's activities in Germany.

25 June 1962

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