

Extract from **Internationale Situationniste** at **Context XXI**

(http://contextxxi.org/the-third-si-conference-in-munich.html)

extracted on: 28 March 2024

Date of this contribution: December 1959

The Third SI Conference in Munich

■ REUBEN KEEHAN (TRANSLATION) ■
SITUATIONISTISCHE INTERNATIONALE

Die Konferenz von München bei der Arbeit

The third Conference of the Situationist International was held in Munich, 17-20 April 1959, fifteen months after the Second Conference in Paris (January 1958). The situationists of Germany, Belgium, Denmark, France, Holland and Italy were represented by: Armando, Constant, G.-E. Debord, Ervin Eisch, Heinz Höfl, Asger Jorn, Giors Melanotte, Har Oudejans, Pinot-Gallizio, Heimrad Prem, Gretel Stadler, Helmut Sturm, Maurice Wyckaert, Hans-Peter Zimmer.

The first session of work, 18 April, begins with a report by Constant on unitary urbanism [Inaugural Report to the Munich Conference]. He announces the foundation in Holland of a bureau of investigation for a unitary urbanism. The discussion which continues along this line extends to all aspects of the situationists' common activity. Prem poses various questions on the subordination of individual investigations to the discipline of the movement; then, on the very definition of a constructed situation, and its relationship to reality as a whole. In response, Jorn presents three initial possibilities for envisaging the construction of a situation "as a

utopian place; as an isolated ambiance through which one may pass; or as a series of multiple ambiances combined in life." All the participants immediately dismiss the first option and show their preference for the third. Armando poses the question of the revolutionary role of the proletariat at the present time.

Next, the Italian delegation asks for details of the concrete program of the "bureau of investigation for a unitary urbanism"; worrying about the autonomy that it could attain within the movement, and (supported on this point by Jorn) of the dangerous specialization that it risks acquiring. Melanotte asks, "How will the importance of a work be evaluated? And can one still be situationist if one develops a work which does not concern unitary urbanism?" It should be pointed out that the notion of unitary urbanism also covers behavior, and that some behavior can be situationist without anything having been created. Constant responds that the responsibility of giving directives for unitary urbanism belongs to the whole of the SI and that no situationist can be disinterested. The activity of the "bureau of investigation for UU," like that of the Experimental Laboratory in Alba, depends on the situationist movement — neither of these particular organisms must engage the SI; but the inverse.

The second session opens with a report by Zimmer on the conditions of our action in Germany, and the history of the formation, since 1957, of the new tendency of the German avant-garde (the "Spur" group) that has now joined the Situationist International. Zimmer and his comrades, beginning with a simply

pictorial opposition to modernist uniformity (comprised mainly by recently introduced tachism) wanted to move toward a total work of art — here referring to the architecture of King Louis II of Bavaria related to Wagnerian opera — including its social and political aspects. They therefore realized that "they had other still inexpressible goals, different from all those of German art." In this investigation into a total art, they have been encouraged by their involvement with the situationists and by the huge scandal caused here by their attack on the philosopher Bense at the beginning of the year. They targeted Bense because he is a disciple of what they characterize as "a typical post-war philosophy: a philosophy in ruins." The collective action that they support is opposed to the anti-creative collectivism of Bense, who aims "to make a meal of constructivism." The journals representing these dominant reactionary positions in Germany are principally *Kunstwerk*, *Zero* and *Kunst Schönehaus*.

Jorn responds by evoking the relationship between the single and the multiple. Debord appreciates favorably the decisive extremism demonstrated by Zimmer's report. He insists on the necessity and the difficulties of making it concrete; and warns our German comrades of importing into their country artificial novelties already used elsewhere. In an era when culture can no longer be considered in any terms but those of global unity, the task of an international avant-garde organization is precisely to thwart this regulating mechanism of pseudo-modernism.

Oudejans intervenes, on behalf of the

Dutch delegation, to point out that rationalization can and must be utilized, as it is the basis of superior constructions. To refuse it would be to choose the impotent dreams of the past. Sturm constructs a lively critique of what he considers the pragmatism of Oudejans' positions. To the contrary, Constant underlines their dialectical sense. Pinot-Gallizio and Jorn comment on the next few points.

After an adjournment, the session recommences with a discussion on the eleven points of the Amsterdam declaration, presented to the conference as a proposal for a minimum program of the SI. After a long enough debate, the declaration is unanimously adopted by the participants, with amendments slightly modifying the first, third, ninth and eleventh points (see the *Documents* published below this report [Corrections to Adopting the Eleven Points of Amsterdam]).

The 20 April session is devoted to practical organizational decisions. The Conference approves the movement's activities since the Paris Conference, particularly the Italian section's action during the Guglielmi affair, an action which provoked the aesthetic indignation of the only enemies of freedom. The quasi-dissolution of the activities of the French SI group is explained by the conditions of overwhelming conformism inspired by the military and the police, currently dominating the new regime in that country, and the length of the colonial war in Algerian, which has conditioned and broken the youth of France: from now on, Paris can no longer be considered as the center of modern cultural experimentation. On the other hand, the Conference congratulates the SI's progress in Germany and Holland. A Fourth Conference is considered for England, in order to develop situationist possibilities that appear there.



The editorial committee of *Internationale Situationniste*, the central bulletin of the SI, is enlarged. The old committee, still in place, is completed by Constant (Holland) and Helmut Sturm (Germany). Wyckaert proposes the revival of the publication of *Potlatch* as the interior periodical of the SI. The conference approves this project, whose execution is entrusted to the Dutch section. A German edition of *Internationale Situationniste* is decided in principle for before the end of the year, under the direction of Heinz Höfl.



The conference adopts the transitional resolution of a "situationist presence in the arts today," which must unleash the most extreme experimental growth, which would be linked to whatever constructive perspectives emerge in the future. It will lead an effective action in culture from its present reality. Accompanying the above arrangements, the Conference allows SI members to support our ideas in newspapers and journals not controlled by us, under the sole condition that these publications are not considered reactionary in their field; and that the situationists do not allow any ambiguity as to their taking no part in the editorship responsible for these publications.

One last discussion on the present state of properly situationist projects is concluded with a clarification by Melanotte: "None of what we do is situationist. Only unitary urbanism, when it is realized, will start to be situationist."

As soon as speeches by Pinot-Gallizio, Jorn, Constant and Oudejans mark the end of the Conference, an experimental alcohol made especially for the occasion by Pinot-Gallizio is distributed around the room. It is well into the night before it is succeeded by more classical drinks.

On the morning of 21 April, the tract "*Ein kultureller Putsch während Ihr schlaf!*" (A Cultural Putsch While You Sleep!) is distributed in Munich, by which time the situationists have already begun leaving the city.



Situationist International: Situationistisch / Situationist: All das, was sich auf die Theorie oder auf die praktische Tätigkeit von Situationen bezieht. Derjenige, der sich damit beschäftigt, Situationen zu konstruieren. Mitglied der situationistischen Internationale.

Situationismus: Sinnloses Wort, missbräuchlich durch Ableitung des vorigen gebildet. Einen Situationismus gibt es nicht — was eine Doktrin zur Interpretation der vorhandenen Tatsachen bedeuten würde. Selbstverständlich haben sich die Anti-Situationisten den Begriff „Situationismus“ ausgedacht.

License of this contribution
Gemeinfrei
Gemeinfrei