

*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, intersubjectivity 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 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. 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 Effenberg, 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 Mojžiš, 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.

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