

Communication from the surrealist group in Stockholm

(New Year 2004)

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2004 strategy



Giuliano Medici, NN, MF and a painting by JA in the stage adaptation of JAs "Funbo Horror" (dedicated to JE) at "Rights of anger" at Fylkingen, Stockholm 020620

Situation of the group

For some years now, one of the things that has been among our most important conditions is that the number of active group members declined tangibly – some moved abroad, some felt dissatisfied with collective activity, some turned to cultural careers, and one went to prison (Recently however that tide seem to have turned). We felt some nausea about our former publications and the fact that it was still possible for them to play a part as, and be appreciated as, *minor cultural journals*. We felt an even larger urge than usual to wander, both to physically walk instead of sitting in meetings, and to drift and question anything we knew. This came out as a general strategy of *vagrancy*. During this, it became evident that there were some basic pillars forming the necessary minor demands on ourselves on the level of concrete attitudes for a surrealist activity.

1) non-conformism

2) collectivity

3) curiosity

4) care for the poetic phenomenon

It seems like the absence of either of these represent the demarcation line versus all the different varieties of non-surrealism, pseudo-surrealism or just fruitless surrealism that we suspect would lead to dogmatism and stagnation *or* to reconciliation.

Then, on the level of specific activities, we can sum up four practical principles for our activities during the past few years; which cannot be regarded as long-term constants but rather strategic choices guided by shared emotional inclinations or judgements of the specific present situations, that we cannot say when we will move on from:

1) abstentionism from publishing (or more exactly – keeping any publishing activity **underground**: it must be admitted that we during this period have produced a few minor publications)

2) non-sectarianism (notably versus political activist groups and versus the artists meeting point of Fylkingen, up to points where we admittedly have temporarily forgotten the specifically surrealist aspect of surrealist activity)

3) vagrancy (that is physical mobility, restlessness in leaving the static café/pub/restaurant/home/social-center milieus, tendency towards spatial and temporal denivellation, "loose lifestyle", outlawishness, individual economic poverty, etc)

4) a distinct desperation (on the emotional, moral and political levels: the remarkably increased level of repression – of which the violence in Göteborg and the sentences of JE and others are but the most ridiculously open examples, the vanishing social security systems/public solidarity institutions, the so called "war on terrorism" on every level, the lethal farciness of almost every single piece of news, etc; creating a deeper than ever de-solidarisation with this society and impossibility of reconciling with it. This was also the subject of our leaflet on the anniversary of the Göteborg riots.)

Under these circumstances, we shall not try to deny that our creative output is on a rather low level. The collective creativity is entirely limited to scattered and ephemeral outbreaks within organised games. The individual creativity often appears as a personal affair, situated outside group activity and remarkably traditional for each

individual as regards the medium chosen. Then of course, the excessive walking, rational/irrational talking, various experiences of psychic excursions/rarities, and trying to find new forms of activity outside of habit, is a field of collective and individual creativity that it would be regressive or formalistic to deny, but nevertheless one that does *not in any way render unnecessary* or outdated the "traditional" ways of exteriorising/materialising the concrete poetic necessity or poetic vision.

During these years a few examples of notable outbreaks of collective creativity remains: 1 1/2 public surrealist shows at Fylkingen: the surrealist soiree concerning oblivion in September 2000, and the collective stage adaptation of two musical compositions by JA within the "Rights of anger" first anniversary of the Göteborg riots in June 2002 (the latter also including an individual work by JB and Svankmajer's film "Byt" among other things), the three LÖSDRIVAREN issues, the two DIABOLIK issues, and a number of games (which we will account for further on).

Individual works to have surfaced includes various musical pieces and performances by JB, regularly published comics by JA, poems by EKO (and occasionally HB, KE, MF), KE's "Erotic manifesto", a pamphlet on the social democratic conspiracy, and an introduction to the surrealist conception, critique and hopes of *reality* in a live role playing magazine.

And just to remind you, we acknowledge in passing that except for some details (a few unhappy wordings and a few specific questions which perhaps haven't maintained their relevance in the form in which we adressed them) we stay in basic accordance with our groups 90's tracts: The scream in the sack, the Open letter to Guy Girard (anticritique regarding the former), The poetic against the mystic, and Stone, Scissors, Paper; above all in their basic attempt to pursue collectivity, nonconformism and communication at any price.

Recent games

While JE was locked up, we held regular fortnightly meetings in prison. The prison provided just as much poetical data and mythological scenario as any other facility, landscape or urban environment, so we chose to ignore the fact that enclosing should also deprave the general sensibility of the imprisoned subject.

Number four of our poetical fanzine LÖSDRIVAREN (The Vagrant) was devoted to the poetical experience of the division between inside and outside occurring during imprisonment. The "Notes on the mythology of Åby state prison" collected and investigated the different mythological material that was discovered during the meetings in prison. We found out that the basic aspect of Åby was centered around the development of cryogenetical techniques and mummification. The obvious parallel between high-technological freezing and ancient preservation was highlighted with occult signs presenting different means of escaping.

Another game we played was "The phenomenology of the Cell: simultaneous experiment". For a short period – especially during the hour between 0.00 and 1.00 on the 25th of April, but including relevant messages starting with EKO's nightmare just before visiting prison on the 20th (Hitler's birthday) – we decided to try to dream about different states relating to the experiment of the cell. The result was horrifying:

not only did we have very accurate dreams about the cell, but some friends – without being aware of our game – also sent us information of their dreams about the cell.

“Introjected Dream-memories” was yet another game we played in prison. NN read artificial dreams to us that he had collaged from different news and articles. After some hours or days, the participants wrote down the memory of the dreams, thus creating a mnemotechnical fertilization of the artificial dreams.

“Biography for the poet” was a game where the participants very rapidly wrote down a word on a piece of paper and then passed it along to the next participant who wrote another word etc. We used as many papers as there were participants. Out of the resulting poems we created a biography for the fictive author of the poems.

“Messages from nowhere” we learnt from the Chicago anthology “Surrealist subversions” and produced rather rich results.

We also tried the “Old night” game suggested from Britain; trying to find the night at noon. We made a preliminary methodological study where we walked all together, and then a parallel experiment with everybody in different places, and we intend to proceed with trying to find night at dawn.

A game called “A case and a solution” was inspired by Rabelais-reading. In a 90s enquiry we touched upon whether surrealism could be useful or not in contributing to real everyday problems such as constipation, Göran Persson, overpopulation, AIDS, and insurance authorities. We wanted to explore this. In the form of a common discussion (but it might just as well be tried as written internal enquiry) we identified problems we perceived as real problems in everyday life, and produced suggestions for their solutions on three simultaneous levels; 1. logically, abolishing the problem with a mental act; 2. excessively, in the manner of Rabelais; 3. insurrectionally, by producing a *situation* of social dynamism.

A game that we haven't completed yet is our investigations into the intersubjectiveness of the members of the surrealist group (intersubjectiveness in the sense of “objective subjectiveness in-between the individuals”). All participants write down personal questions (for example: what is X's relation to water? Why does X need to make love with his own negation?) Then randomly one person is chosen to answer the questions, but pretending to be another person in the group (which is also randomly decided). The preliminary results have been very interesting, but all answers will then be combined to evoke the subjectivity of the trickster monkey king in our midst, which we haven't carried out yet.

The case of JE

JE is now out of prison.

Dear friends

Recently we have seen and appreciated especially several initiatives from the surrealists of Ioannina, Greece and of Portland, USA. We usually have rather good contacts with british and spanish surrealists. We've also seen signs of good old Chicago alive and kicking, with renewed energy and also with a new relevance to their traditional attitudes. From Prague though we still await the international bulletin which was said to be ready quite a while ago and we all contributed to printing costs, what happened? We were also surprised to see (in the latest S.U.R.R.) a manifesto called "Barrière d'Enfer", not primarily because we perceived it to be a definitive implicit polemic against the direction our group has been travelling for a long time making "More reality!" the foremost surrealist watchword, but even more because we saw in it perhaps the first time active surrealists consciously abandoned the insistence (so dear to Breton) that the two watchwords "We must act"(Goethe) and "We must dream"(Lenin) for us surrealists remain but one, the french of today instead seemingly clinging to a dualistic denunciation of reality which we find not only anti-dialectical but downright anti-surrealist.

The debate over surrealism and politics

During the heat of last summer we dwelled a lot in a confused discussion about surrealism and politics, confused not so much regarding the individual statements which often have been very clear-sighted and non-controversial, but more in our arguing quite beside each other while being able to see a number of separate issues as the central one. This led to parallel "internal campaigns" of politicisation of the group and "surrealisation" of the group which the major proponents of each perceived as opposed to each other though in practice they were not only possible, but as we subsequently found out necessary, to combine.

Let us first recollect what the question of surrealism and politics is and where it has come today.

The question of surrealism and politics has of course been debated at great length over the years, though often at remarkably general, simplicistic or non-contemporary (historic or just outdated) levels of discussion. Often someone has had to step forward and bring some order in what should be obvious: that the revolutionary engagement of surrealism consists of a continuous scandalisation of bourgeois civilisation and an invocation of radical freedom, that this leads surrealism to collaborations and alliances with various revolutionary groups, without ever being able to restrict its aims to the purely political, thus keeping all such alliances provisional and tending to keep them non-sectarian.

Beside the mainline, a number of alternative strategies, equally derivable from surrealist standpoints and sensibility – have kept popping up more or less regularly (Navilleist, Eluardist, Artaudist, Dalíist etc) and independant of whatever potential they might have had they have remained parentheses on the collective level largely

because they have implied, in practice, a monstrous faith in individual reason and voluntariness and thus a break with basic collective surrealist solidarity.

On the other hand, let's not try to deny that the mainline and the various alliances and strategic moves made under many circumstances probably are animated more by habit and by bureaucratic concerns than by inner dynamics of the cause and true collective spirit.

The basic problem regarding surrealism and politics is, from the surrealist viewpoint, WHY POLITICS AT ALL, when politics in everybody's experience is the sphere *par preference* of stupid compromises, shortsighted tactics, lies and repressive consent, and that devotion to a political cause seems to imply a basic recognition of the supremacy of instrumental, superficial, compromising concerns over the fundamental, maximalistic, non-conformist, all-encompassing ambitions of a non-restricted radical endeavour like surrealism.

This was a problem for a large number of surrealists during the original politisation of the French group in 1925-30, a problem that many individuals overcame by their solidarity with the common adventure but several regrettably didn't overcome (Artaud of course presenting the most moving explication of this refusal to compromise). Even nowadays it seems that for approximately half of all new people attracted to surrealism this represents a major obstacle.

When our group was founded in the middle-80s, half of the people came from Trotskyism and half from creative interests – for the latter, if perhaps it was surrealist works in written poetry and visual arts that triggered their enthusiasm, then the necessity of collective organisation, social nonconformism, the transformation of life in general, were tasks easily deduced or organically reached, but certain other aspects of shared surrealist culture had to be learned: that surrealists in politics should be communists, that surrealists in music should prefer jazz and blues, that surrealists in drugs should prefer alcohol, etc etc, seemed rather arbitrary choices that were adopted in order to get into the surrealist culture on the whole as it seemed and not at all by any inner necessity or evident cohesion.

However it seems inevitable for many of us to engage in daily struggles of more short-term or thematically restricted kinds, not the least in order to hope and work for their enlargements and their synergistic and chance effects in producing new social relations and change. Even though politics still most often remains a restricted sphere, it does so significantly less if the field of politics isn't limited to the most traditional choices of anarchist activism and Trotskyist sectarianism.

We are sad to see that some comrades even believe that it is still relevant to discuss surrealism's adherence to either anarchism or Trotskyism. Though of course individual surrealists must be free to be politically active/ convinced in either camp, and that it may be perfectly relevant for surrealist groups to collaborate on specific issues with either, or for surrealists to stress whatever specific and historic affinities they might find especially interesting, however it must be stressed that neither anarchism nor Trotskyism has at any time been the political equivalent of surrealism, the objectively given ally of surrealism, nor the political standpoint evidently deducible from surrealism. And even as individual alternatives they are both today clearly sagging; anarchism in its ever inherent simplicism, which seems to imply in every single moment the possibility and even necessity of deducing the right political viewpoint from individual desire and individual reason alone and not at all from given objective circumstances or from any kind of complicated theory, Trotskyism in its narrowminded traditionalism and bureaucracy, its fundamental assumption that

nothing substantial has changed in society the past 70 years and that there remains a large revolutionary communist global workers movement that are merely cheated by stalinist or post-stalinist usurpers of power of its organisations and states.

The notion of an original political line developed from surrealism have often been tempting but rarely got very far. (Perhaps *Contre-Attaque* represent one of the most ambitious attempts so far, and that still didn't get very far politically.)

Still, it is remarkable to what extent situationist politics provide a good suggestion of a surrealist politics. Not only in its uncompromising critique of bureaucracy and self-sacrifice in revolutionary politics, not only in its analysis of the material reality of the symbolic order of power through a generalised system of *non-participating* in spectacle society, but above all in its insistence that all politics take as its starting point the fundamental frustration with present everyday life and its insistence on releasing the emancipatory/ creative powers of subjectivity by an unloosing of the unknown through the construction of situations.

Actually, several people within the surrealist movement have for decades proclaimed the need to see the situationist movement as more or less an internal dissident project; just like the *surréalisme-révolutionnaire*, like Bataille and his circle - not only are the starting points surrealist, the participants close to or recently out of surrealism, but the aims and strategies themselves objectively surrealist. Thus these groupings have made important experiences that perhaps for one reason or another were impossible to arrive at within organised surrealism and then in retrospect have a lot to teach the surrealists. It seems highly relevant to regard the the activity of the Situationist International as to a large degree consisting of the very project of developing autonomous surrealist politics.

It must be recognised too that in the 60's many notions that were far closer to surrealism than the endless pie throwing game of anarchism and trotskyism, were broadly introduced into revolutionary politics, notably of course through the wide diffusion of situationist ideas (or for that part postsituationist or prosituationist) but remarkably heterogenous in origin and scope. Since then, such more or less objectively surrealist ideas have often been present as small-scale reminders, internal critiques etc in the marginals of traditional leftist movements. But at least in the ideas and struggles of the italian autonomous left the critique of everyday life seems to have retained a wider and more central role.

Today, with the globalisation movement and the international diffusion of zapatist, autonomist and post-autonomist influences, in many countries we see the traditional trotskyist and anarchist movement continue fading away at the same time as the "objectively surrealist ideas in politics" have gained a much broader diffusion and influence than ever. The situation in this respect may of course be very different in different countries, but in sweden, beside the eternally backward-minded parliamentarist tacticians and orthodox sect builders (but actually even within their ranks!) the notions of critique of everyday life, social factory, spectacle society, experimental strategies, questioningly wandering, exodus, radical subjectivity, construction of situations etc etc are important guidelines in the whole extraparliamentary left movement. In this sense, we find politics today more surrealist than for several decades.

But, these notions, potentially or superficially surrealist as they may be, are everywhere intertwined with either traditional short-sighted utilistic strategics, violently anti-poetic postmodernist jibbering, ordinary fruitless individualism and dozens of minor brands of more or less bad ideas that may be judged compromising,

conservative and even reactionary concerning matters of the mind, everyday life, and/or morals. The political scene presents (to an even larger and much more important extent than the academic world) a vast arena of eclecticism and confusion where the most radical suggestions always seem to appear alongside with all kinds of banalities, misunderstandings and pure bullshit.

The sphere of political activism is founded in democracy, openness and voluntariness and thus doomed to dwell on the level of the least common denominator, whether that be in action, in the campaigns, demonstrations, interventions, sabotages performed, or in the rational-verbal compromise of analysis/ outlook. It is extremely important to keep in mind that this sphere of activism on the one hand will continue to create actions, methods, slogans and pamphlets that are more or less perfectly surrealist on the objective level, and on the other hand remains fundamentally apart from surrealism in the formers constituting aspect of compromise, its necessary eclecticism, its halt well before the magical invisible dividing line that demarcates surrealist activity in its epistemological break with common sense, its omnipotent poetic criterion, its insatiable creative hunger, its binding insistence on a radical experimental methodology and collectivity, its mental uncompromising. Surrealism can never merge into the activist sphere without mentally extinguishing the surrealist project in its specificity. Several bad experiences have been made.

But still, on a political level the theoretical discourse of so called autonomous marxism has proven to pose interesting problems and perhaps solutions that transgress the simplyfied positioning between different leftist schools. We have not yet discussed at length the implications that autonomous marxism may have vis a vis surrealist politics, but some theoretical inquiries that we find interesting are:

- the divergence from capitalist social relations taken as the affirmation of a diversity of different ways of being. This accounts in political terms for some of the political implications of surrealism that we have seen in vague, tentative or very general terms, that surrealist activity in itself not only becomes an anti-capitalist practice, but also an intransigent line in the experimentation for the social foundation of another society.

- the possibility of alliances and cooperation with groups or movements that participate in the creating of 'autonomous' spaces, actions or practices, without having to adhere to the traditional pattern of bureaucratic compromises and utilistic tactics.

- the introduction of experimentation (on a social, epistemological and organisational level) in the political sphere, contributing to the development of the communist movement (in the sense of "that which moves in the direction of another society" and expressly not identified with any organisation or similar) as an open-ended process which expands the field of the possible, instead of reducing it to the pre-concieved plan of this or that organisation.

Thus, the focus is shifted away from the traditional view that a forthcoming (and constantly postponed) social revolution will be necessary for the realisation of conditions that may expand the vision of a poetry 'made by all', in favour of a daily subversion that accumulates the "fundamental paradigm shift in all social relations" (in accordance with our old thesis from "Stone, Scissors, Paper"). However, we still do not know what may be acquired by the crossfertilization of surrealism, autonomous marxism and empirical experimentation.

Missing persons dept

Simply for your knowledge, without wanting to make a big issue out of it, we take this opportunity to state the *nature of the detachment* of a few individuals that several of you know and have been in contact with as group representatives or for personal reasons or otherwise.

Bruno Jacobs maintains, as several of you know, his quest for true poetic disturbances and keeps in contact with surrealist comrades without being part of the Swedish group.

Aase Berg and Carl-Michael Edenborg, the two people that got absorbed into publicity during the *Stora Saltet* phase and neither wanted to nor could partake in collective surrealist activity afterwards, today appear as each others diametrical opposites in relation to surrealism: AB as an antisurrealist for surrealism and CME as a prosurrealist against surrealism. AB, who always proudly and self-allegedly has been a person of contradictions and theoretical ignorance, has publicly taken stands against her surrealist past because she is now *interested in reality*. While working as the editor of Sweden's leading official literary magazine *BLM* she remains one of the very finest surrealist poets in this language and publishes her poems regularly with wide acclamation among the literary critics. CME, in his quest for provocative publicity stunts for his publishing house Vertigo, finally gave in the respect for surrealist collectivity, tradition, morality and action that he had kept even after ceasing to contribute to collective surrealist activity several years ago. His final words was "speaking out" about his past in an entertainment newspaper, summarizing the experience of the surrealist group of the 80's as experimenting with anal sex and extreme lifestyle until one member of the group went insane and he himself had children instead. Still he does sometimes publish books of surrealist interest and likes to refer to the surrealist tradition in his newspaper criticism and his TV appearances as pornographer and pornography expert. This is evidently one of the last phases in his grandiose "suicide of the spirit" that he has pursued for long – initially his cynicism and quest for simplification felt fresh and intellectually challenging but in the long run he has done nothing but provided an example that rhetoric violence, superficial marxism, pornography and coprolaly can be a rather successful marketing concept. We're sad to say that the only lesson we learnt is what we already knew: the public sphere is contagious in the simplest, most uninteresting sense; and pure recuperation remains the most effective antisurrealist strategy.

A possible opening, a hope of transgressing the political project and an outline of future experimentation

Exodus out of surrealist habits and jargon, café life, manner of discussion, for a multiaspectal communication, richer vagrancy?

Antisecterism also on the theoretical level, versus/between situationism, autonomism, zapatism, empireism, nomadism/schizoanalysis an even post-structuralism generally; adopt and develop experimental and methodological stances (NB qualified experimentalism has nothing to do with simple lack of method, spontaneism and trial-and-error, but rather careful experiment design to ascertain what epistemological results are reachable) – should we even refrain from the eternal taking sides over Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Bakunin, Freud, etc? Nevertheless epistemological liberalism is the villain behind a lot of the dilutedness/eclecticism that make all good ideas smell bad in cultural and political contexts! – particularly every ambition to depreciate the revolutionary contributions made by Hegel, Marx and Freud always lead to compromise and snow mash. But if the poststructuralist perspective for instance always represent one step forward and two steps back, we remain interested in what becomes visible in that single step – to steal the new experience back to the arsenal of poetry.

Continuing antisecterism versus experimentalist artists and political activists, but severe critique of activism and art, stressing the fundamental epistemological rupture and the non-utility of the poetic spirit and spiritual noncompromising.

Creation of situations, Nougéan manipulations, slight disturbances, in the urban environment and elsewhere, establish glimpses and vertigo, adventure the reality views of people.

Contribute to and question reality with surrealist games, keep investigating whatever contributions scientific method may bring.

Seduction towards the abysses of the spirit through poetic confusion, finding ways of communicating the unhandlable, the real function of poetry, where and how it can gain instigating and insurrectional qualities.

**The surrealist group in Stockholm
August-December 2003**

**Christian Andersson
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Mattias Forshage
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Emma Lundenmark
Riyota Kasamatsu (exile)
Niklas Nenzén
Eva Kristina Olsson
Sebastian Osorio**

Our webpage <www.surrealistgruppen.org> is sometimes updated, and we shortly will add hidden pages for the exclusive use of our friends and comrades all over the world, including our recent publications etc, The adresses will shortly be communicated.

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2004 STRATEGY

The provisional Stockholm Surrealist New Year Squad (CA, JB, JE, MF) had gathered in a pub in Stockholm 031230 in order to develop specific strategies for the year 2004. As it was, this turned out to be performed in the form of the old surrealist game of For... Against..., evidently based upon the french Read...Don't Read game, and perhaps first put in print by Ilmar Laaban in an exhibition catalogue for the Imaginisterna in the 40s.

We scribbled down words in either of two columns, in the usual mode of "passing-scrap-of-papers-around-quickly-enough-for-no-one-to-grasp-connection-and-control"; thus the single words are probably motivated intellectually or emotionally by the individual player who wrote them, but the resulting connections are new, unintentional and the interesting part. The results are edited, deleting some of the connections as far too banal or personal.

FOR hell, AGAINST today
For the dream, against in consequence
For chaos, against manners and customs
For drugs, against loyalty
For order, against the royal guard parade
For unexpected alliances, against history
For Action! Action! Action!, against the king
For food, against the queen
For method, against personality
For history, against mother
For Surrealism, against father
For denivellation, against children
For awakeness, against general nivellation
For being in love, against sex-appeal
For play, against objections
For slimy surprises...

WITH blood, WITHOUT excuses
With the forehead, without clothes
With animals, without basis
With the shadow, without a score
With hands, without humor
With feet, without death
With love, without credit marks
With ourselves, without sounds
With noise, without compromises
With method, without banalities
With order, without press releases
With calm, without fate
With overwhelming emotions, without rhetoric
With exposed weak spots, without afterthought
With the abyss, without perfume
With the weather, without body

SHOW continuation, HIDE writing
Show the wound, hide the purpose
Show exposed weak spots, hide the gaze
Show the true face of the enemy, hide home
Show excrements, hide the beard
Show confusion, hide the wish
Show fairy tales, hide the disease
Show the births, hide the sexual intercourses
Show shaving foam, hide pertinence and cleanliness

REMEMBER the horse, FORGET the day
Remember tradition, forget name
Remember the mistakes, forget personality
Remember the sound, forget the keys
Remember the space in-between, forget the rumour
Remember the rumour, forget geometry
Remember the rain, forget the origin
Remember mycology, forget the future
Remember digestion, forget the current
Remember water, forget taste
Remember lust, forget the intention
Remember laziness, forget absence
Remember the ravens, forget sexual intercourse
Remember the compass, forget street names
Remember contagion, forget the placement
Remember fruits, and remember moss