

The Statue of Charles Fourier¹

By Pierre Lotrous²

The first statue of Charles Fourier³ was the work of the sculptor Emile Derré (1867-1938). It was erected thanks to the gifts of workers cooperatives and with the support of the municipal council. The statue was unveiled on 4 June 1899. The original plan called for its installation on the place de l'Abreuvoir in Montmartre, where Fourier once lived, but it was finally set upon an embankment on the western end of the boulevard de Clichy.

By virtue of a decree signed on 11 October 1941 by Marshal Pétain,⁴ the statue was removed and melted down in 1942.

On the initiative of Pierre Lepetit and with the help of certain Enragés and situationists,⁵ the statue of Charles Fourier – a plaster replica that had been carefully bronzed – was once again set upon its pedestal on 10 March 1969. It was accompanied by this plaque: “In homage to Charles Fourier, from the barricaders of the rue Gay-Lussac (the night of 10 May 1968).”

The statue was kidnapped the following day⁶ by the Prefect of Police . . .

Research undertaken 25 years later⁷ did not reveal why became of it. It wasn't preserved in the offices where it was taken and an order for its destruction was never found, which confirms that one mustn't entrust anything to the Prefect of Police – unless one wants to see a criminal object made into an object of a crime. The current mayor (Jean Tiberi) inaugurated a Versailles place de la Commune,⁸ but monuments in homage of Fourier still remain a utopian dream. So much the better! A Parisian mayor honoring Charles Fourier is as misplaced as a

¹ Published in Raoul Vaneigem and Gérard Berréby, *Rien n'est fini, tout commence* (Allia, 2014). Dated 2000. No original source given. Translated by NOT BORED! 27 November 2014. Footnotes by the translator.

² A member of the Enragés in 1968, Pierre Lotrous did not join to the Situationist International, as did several of his other comrades, but remained close to at least one who did (Christian Sebastiani).

³ A famous philosopher, utopianist and socialist, Fourier (1772-1837) exerted a powerful influence on the French Revolution of 1848 and the Paris Commune (1871), as well as on the situationists, especially Raoul Vaneigem.

⁴ Philippe Pétain (1856-1951) was a French general who became the Chief of State of Vichy France between 1940 and 1944.

⁵ It would seem likely that one of them was René Viénet, who was skilled in metallurgy. Cf. <http://www.notbored.org/ReneVietet2.pdf>.

⁶ The note that the message that Guy Debord sent to the Italian Section of the SI on 12 March 1969 states, “it was removed this morning by the police.” <http://www.notbored.org/debord-12March1969a.html>. See also “The Return of Charles Fourier,” *Internationale Situationniste* #12 (September 1969), which notes that the replica weighed over 200 pounds and that, while it only took eight young people 15 minutes to use wooden beams to hoist the statue into place, it took 30 cops, a crane and undisclosed amount of time to topple and remove it.

⁷ Perhaps in the wake of Debord's suicide on 30 November 1994.

⁸ 12 October 1999.

Sollers⁹ speaking of Guy Debord. But in the old world from which one must expect anything, the true is only a moment of the false. Fourier died in Paris on 9 March 1835.



⁹ Philippe Sollers, a French writer whom Debord himself scorned, has spoken quite a lot (and quite favorably) about him. Cf. Debord's letter to Annie Le Brun dated 5 December 1992: <http://www.notbored.org/debord-5December1992.html>.