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Mark Traugott, *The Insurgent Barricade*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010. xviii + 436 pp. Maps, tables, figures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$39.95 U.S. (cl.). ISBN 0520266323.

Review by Jill Harsin, Colgate University.

Mark Traugott is well known to French historians for his extensive work in the history of modern France: *Armies of the Poor* (1985), an analysis of the Paris Mobile Guard in the June Days of 1848; *The French Worker: Autobiographies from the Early Industrial Era* (1993), a collection of rare working class memoirs which he edited and translated; *Repertoires and Cycles of Collective Action* (1995), an edited collection; and numerous incisive articles.^[1] *The Insurgent Barricade* takes up some of the themes of his previous work, but extends his scope in both time and space. His purpose is to look at the barricade as an element of popular culture and as a dominant political and military technique. Originating in France (or perhaps Belgium), it spread to the rest of Europe in one great burst in 1848.

In the course of this work, Traugott illuminates received barricade history in several important ways. First of all, he argues that it is impossible to find the moment of invention of the barricade. A number of European cities stretched chains across streets (one end of the chain firmly built into the side of a building, the other linked to the building opposite) to protect from invading armies, to protest against rapacious officials, or to keep order in neighborhoods in times of trouble. This tactic was perhaps most notable in Flanders, particularly in Ghent, in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, as the inhabitants used it both to defend against the English and to rebel against their overlords. Étienne Marcel, a textile merchant who frequently traveled to Flanders, likely heard of the tactic; in any case he used it when, as the elected *prévôt de marchands* of Paris, he introduced chains, built battlements, and dug entrenchments during a dangerous period (1355-1358) of the Hundred Years' War.

The barricade proper went beyond the chains to include barrels full of stones or dirt lined up along the chains, an innovation that provided cover in case of armed confrontation. Subsequent barricades, as he notes, used a variety of different materials. The famous Day of the Barricades in Paris, in 1588, has generally been regarded as the first use. Widely publicized by contemporary writers, the barricades in 1588 essentially immobilized France's capital city in a time of civil war. Moreover, the very name given to the day indicated "barricade consciousness," an essential part of Traugott's definition—that is, that the individuals involved were self-consciously drawing upon a widely understood repertoire. He skillfully sorts through the contemporary sources to find three competing versions of how the barricades came into existence on that day. All versions stress the important planning role of the local group known as the Paris Sixteen.

Yet, Traugott argues that this was not, in fact, the origin of the barricades, citing the *Commentaires* of Blaise de Monluc, *maréchal de France*, who besieged the Protestant towns of Mont-de-Marsan in 1569 and Rabastens-de-Bigorre in 1570. The inhabitants of both towns built barricades, as Monluc called them, of barrels filled with dirt. They built the structures and Monluc named them correctly, in terms of the usual understanding of the term, but where did the action and Monluc's "barricade consciousness" originate? There is no real answer, but Traugott suggests that Monluc's *Commentaires*, not published until 1595, could not compete with the triumphant, widely publicized versions of what had happened in Paris. Thus the Day of the Barricades became the official point of origin.

Traugott also corrects the record in regard to the French Revolution. It has been an historical commonplace to suggest that after the barricades of the Fronde in 1648, barricades did not appear again until the 1827 demonstrations in Paris. Barricades, however, were used on several occasions during the French Revolution: in Paris on July 14–15, 1789, where they were overshadowed by the Bastille; in Varennes on June 20–21, 1791, as the locals mobilized the town to prevent a rescue of the king, who had been stopped there in his flight from the country; and in Paris again, during the Prairial insurrection in 1795. In addition, Napoleon's famous "whiff of grapeshot" against the Vendémiaire demonstrations stopped barricade builders from completing their work.

From this Traugott moves to 1848, the year of revolution throughout most of Europe. His survey of the 1848 revolutions will be familiar to most readers. Nevertheless, he clarifies the diffusion of French revolutionary slogans and aims as well as barricades, and clearly shows the extent to which barricades became a standard part of the revolutionary repertoire from this point on throughout Europe. His primary focus is on the "agents of diffusion" of the events in Paris. In one particularly interesting section, he traces the timing of the arrival of the news from Paris as it spread throughout Europe (pp. 129–140). Of great importance were the new illustrated newspapers, whose drawings of barricades were virtually a how-to manual for building them. Specific groups also carried the revolutionary contagion with them. He focuses in particular on students, political refugees, and traveling workers, and fills in much detail on the passage of these groups through Paris.

Traugott concludes with a lengthy, insightful chapter on the functions of the barricade—as cover, as a means of mobilizing support, as a claim of territory, for example—and a shorter, more speculative chapter on the barricade as part of the "culture of revolution." Finally, the author provides an impressive database of 155 European "barricade events" from 1569 to 1898 (pp. 243–312), along with an analytical classification that allows for comparison of these events in terms of such matters as casualties, the numbers of barricades, and the duration of the episode. In addition, and using his classification system, he weights the events to sift genuine upheavals from less serious disorders, limiting this analysis to France, which accounts for 92 of the 155, or 59 percent. The year 1848, not surprisingly, shows up as the densest year of barricade activity in France; more unexpected is the fact that, out of the 322 years covered by the database, only thirty-two showed any barricade activity at all—one indication, it would seem, that building a barricade was not a casual matter (pp. 80, 230). Though more barricades may be added to the database (Traugott has invited readers to send along further instances), the copycat phenomenon—the barricades that went up in imitation of highly publicized events elsewhere—suggests that the total number of years may not increase by much.

Traugott has made two deliberate decisions about coverage in this work. One seems eminently sensible. He does not venture into the twentieth century because that would take him into a broader global coverage. While such a work would be useful—and no doubt this study will stimulate such projects—this book already has impressive breadth, extending from the late thirteenth to the end of the nineteenth century, and throughout Europe. The other decision is simply puzzling. Though much of this study inevitably concerns France, he has chosen not to cover France in the nineteenth century, beyond a few brief references, which "is explained by the fact that every one of them [the revolutions of 1830 and 1848, the insurrections of June 1848 and May 1871] has been subjected to extensive scrutiny by historians, to the point where there is little that I could add to what is already known" (p. xiii). [Full disclosure: this author has written a study of the insurgencies of the July Monarchy.] Aside from the fact that one might make a similar decision about the Fronde, or 1588, both of which receive ample coverage, this decision has presented him with some difficulties; many of his examples, in the otherwise excellent summary chapter seven, are taken from France in the nineteenth century. He thus finds himself using the observations of, for example, Heinrich Heine and other educated observers in Paris, rather than the invaluable archival sources available.

In spite of these decisions, however, this study makes several major contributions to history and the historiography of revolutions, popular culture, and the history of traditions. It is clearly argued and well written. What follows in the rest of this review is an attempt to raise some additional questions—on the issues of spontaneity, the evolution of barricades, and governmental responses—as a way of generating further thought about this important issue.

First, Traugott makes the significant underlying assumption that barricades were and are essentially spontaneous, an assertion that appears at the beginning of the book: “. . . barricades in their purest form are artifacts of the popular imagination, the collective and spontaneous creations of anonymous crowd members who base their actions on knowledge that has been sustained, transmitted and applied without the benefit of formal organization or institutional hierarchy” (p. xi). His working definition of the barricade does not explicitly include spontaneity: “A barricade is an improvised structure, built and defended by civilian insurgents as a means of laying claim to urban space and mobilizing against military or police forces representing the constituted authorities. In the clearest examples, contemporary observers and/or the insurgents themselves will explicitly label such a structure a barricade, though their reversion to recognizable patterns of behavior long associated with barricade construction may also be sufficient to confirm the attribution” (p. 21). Immediately above this definition, however, spontaneity again appears, as he argues that “we need to highlight the process whereby insurgents spontaneously joined in collective action, even as they interacted with the representatives of the social order they were seeking to overthrow” (p. 21).

Were barricades always spontaneous? His study of the Day of the Barricades in 1588 suggests on the contrary that there was considerable planning by the Sixteen. Other studies have indicated the degree of planning behind the 1834 Paris insurrection staged by the *Société des Droits de l'Homme*, and the 1839 insurrection, planned by Auguste Blanqui and the *Société des Saisons*.^[2] To be sure, the initial barricade-building in any insurrection often involved a large number of people including women and children, who were largely unknown to each other, and the atmosphere was often festive. By the time the barricade was challenged, most of the initial builders were long gone, leaving a small and determined central core. There was, in short, a significant difference between building a barricade and defending it.

Perhaps another way of looking at this issue is Traugott's suggestion that barricades “evolved over time in response to constantly shifting military, political, and cultural exigencies” (p. 178). It seems more accurate to suggest that throughout the period studied, there were very different sorts of crowd actions, all involving barricades, that nevertheless had very different purposes, different sorts of personnel, and different triggers. The database itself suggests the coexistence of different types throughout history. For example, the first barricade listed is the 1569 event mentioned by Monluc in Mont-de-Marsan. The residents used filled barrels as a hasty repair of holes blown through their walls (p. 246); similar in purpose were the September 1830 barricades in Brussels, meant to defend against Dutch troops sent to subdue their rebellion (p. 264). These two barricades, and others like them, seem very different in type from barricades that went up against an attempt to restructure the method of tax collection, as in Dijon in 1630 (p. 249). Nevertheless, there was a sort of evolution, as the nineteenth century saw the addition of a new proactive sort of barricade erected to make demands, typified by most of the 1848 barricades and Paris barricades of the 1830s. One type was for military defense; another was protest of a traditional sort, a simple demand to revoke a recent innovation; and the third supported a coherent list of new demands.

Finally, the sorts of barricades in play provided different challenges to rulers. Traugott does not spend much time examining the dilemma faced by governments, and the continuing use of barricades in an era of technological advances (trains, the telegraph, macadam) that would seem to make them obsolete, and this may not simply reflect the transition of barricades from a fighting strategy to a matter of symbolism. A mass occupation of the public space in the modern era, with or without barricades, places

a contemporary government in the awkward position of either allowing it or crushing it with such force that the government risks being delegitimized. One might think of Tiananmen Square (or lately, Tahrir Square). What mattered in Paris, in 1830 and in February 1848, was the massing of people—less the fact that they built barricades than the fact that their presence on the streets, their sheer numbers, made it impossible for government troops to move. In 1830 Vicomte Jean-Jacques Foucauld, in command of the Royal Gendarmerie, observed, “Il ne m’était pas arrive, depuis huit ans que je commandais la gendarmerie de Paris, de rencontrer une pareille obstination de la part des rassemblements à se reformer aussitôt sur les mêmes endroits d’où l’on venait de les chasser.”[3] Traugott notes that in February 1848, Odilon Barrot, newly appointed as minister, was barely able to make his way through the streets. Louis-Philippe at that point made the decision to abdicate rather than to take the dreadful decision of firing into the crowds. A similar case occurred in the Day of the Barricades in 1588, when the king’s forces were undermined by orders not to take action against the people. Those orders left troops in the awkward position of watching as barricades were assembled in front of them. The two situations, nearly three hundred years apart, reflected the difficult decisions governments faced about whether to fire upon a crowd of civilians who were civilians still, no matter how heavily armed.

One of the marks of a good book is not only its initial presentation, but the extent to which it raises new questions, initiates reasoned debates, and stimulates further research. On all counts, this book succeeds admirably.

NOTES

[1] Mark Traugott, *Armies of the Poor* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985); *The French Worker: Autobiographies from the Early Industrial Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); *Repertoires and Cycles of Collective Action* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

[2] For example, Maurice Dommanget, *Auguste Blanqui: Des Origines à la Révolution de 1848* (Paris: Mouton, 1969) and Jill Harsin, *Barricades: The War of the Streets in Revolutionary Paris, 1830-1848* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

[3] Jean-Jacques Foucauld, *Mémoires sur les événements de juillet 1830* (Paris, E. Dentu, 1851), pp. 49-50.

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