



A History of the Barricade

Eric Hazan

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How the French invented the barricade, and its symbolic impact on popular protests throughout history

In the history of European revolutions, the barricade stands as a glorious emblem. Its symbolic importance arises principally from the barricades of Eric Hazan's native Paris, where they were instrumental in the revolts of the nineteenth century, helping to shape the political life of a continent.

The barricade was always a makeshift construction (the word derives from *barrique* or barrel), and in working-class districts these ersatz fortifications could spread like wildfire. They doubled as a stage, from which insurgents could harangue soldiers and subvert their allegiance. Their symbolic power persisted into May 1968 and, more recently, the Occupy movements.

Hazan traces the many stages in the barricade's evolution, from the Wars of Religion through to the Paris Commune, drawing on the work of thinkers throughout the periods examined to illustrate and bring to life the violent practicalities of revolutionary uprising.

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