Barthas, Louis

By Rémy Cazals

Barthas, Louis
French barrelmaker, corporal and author
Born 14 July 1879 in Homps (Aude), France
Died 04 May 1952 in Peyriac-Minervois (Aude), France

A barrelmaker in a French village and corporal at war in an infantry regiment, Louis Barthas was considered the spokesman of his squad. He wrote a reliable testimony about his experience fighting in the trenches. His book was the first of many published from ordinary people’s diaries and letters.

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Early Life

Louis Barthas (1879-1952) was an excellent pupil but did not advance to secondary education. Even with little education, he had an openmindedness that led him to further his studies on his own. He became a barrelmaker, which led him to become a member of the Socialist Party and a reader of Le Midi socialiste, the daily newspaper edited by his friend Léon Hudelle (1881–1973).

Mobilization and Wartime Writings
In August 1914, at the age of thirty-five and married with two sons, Barthas was mobilized. He arrived at the front lines in Artois on November 1914; he was evacuated to the rear in April 1918. He spent fifty-four months under the colors, forty-one of which he spent as corporal in an infantry regiment right at the front lines in Artois, Verdun, Champagne, Somme, and Argonne.

The corporal lived amidst the men of his squad, shared their daily life, and knew their most intimate thoughts. Barthas’s comrades considered him their spokesman; he wrote against what Barthas called “Bourrage de crâne”, or “stuffing their brains with rubbish.”[1] His written testimony was addressed to posterity, even if that notion was not concretely defined. Barthas’s reliability is confirmed by military sources, the accounts of other soldiers, and Captain Hudelle’s collection of photographs.

In August 1916, Barthas wrote to the deputy Pierre Brizon (1878-1923), requesting pacifist brochures to distribute and discuss among his frontline comrades.[2] After the war, he returned to his village, his family, his job, and his Socialist Party.

Publication of Barthas's Testimony

In 1978, François Maspero took the risk of publishing Barthas’s book, *Les carnets de guerre de Louis Barthas, tonnelier, 1914-1918*, written by an unknown author on a subject unlikely to draw huge crowds. The bet paid off. Now in paperback, 100,000 copies have been printed as of 2014, and translations have been published in Dutch, English, and Spanish. The barrelmaker’s book has motivated his readers to undertake research among veterans, including diaries and letters from the front. As one of the first of its kind to be published, the work by Barthas has led to the discovery that ordinary people, without officers’ stripes on their sleeves, participated in history and knew how to bear witness.

Rémy Cazals, Université de Toulouse II – Jean Jaurès

Section Editor: Alexandre Lafon

Notes


2. ↑ We have only one letter from Barthas to Brizon, signed by his whole name “Louis Barthas, caporal, 296e régiment, 15e compagnie”.

Selected Bibliography

Barthas, Louis - 1914-1918-Online


**Citation**


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A mother refuses to forgive the people who killed her daughter. Look at the headlines in Exercise 1c again. Decide which of the following questions can easily be answered by reading them.

- What happened?
- Who did what?

He also became a Congressman and nearly forgot to mention one of the founding members of the Republican Party. Greeley did this all without any formal education to speak of. By the age of fifteen, he had already left home to take an apprenticeship with a printer in Vermont. It should therefore come as no surprise that he rose through the ranks to eventually lead the United Kingdom to victory during World War II. What probably does come as a surprise or at least would, if he wasn't included on a list with this title, is that he achieved this with a limited education. Churchill, coming from such a good family, was given access to the best education available. Milton Friedman was a socialist, because his publications and speeches meet the criterion for the definition of this word: government ownership or control over significant sectors of the economy, particularly means of production, such as money, roads, and/or redistributionist schemes such as his negative income tax. This is a controversial claim. It is backed up by the evidence. Keywords then becomes, To what extent did Friedman advocate government ownership or control of the means of production? Friedman is clearly on the socialist side of this very important means of production. Friedman was a road socialist. A decrease in low income housing led to the displacement of poor populations. But the social. Lenin's conception of socialist government was an example of his creativity. Some orthodox Marxists of the time opposed the peasants' participation in government, claiming it violated Marxism and would corrupt the government with the peasants' petty bourgeois ideology. But Lenin held that these critics failed to understand Russian reality and underestimated the revolutionary sentiments of the peasantry. Their approach would narrow the government's base of support and ensure its eventual downfall. By then it had become clear that setting up socialism in Russia would be a far more complex process than he envisioned even a year before. The prevailing form of economy in Russia in 1918 was individual production on small farms, with only scattered industrial production.