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Ida Grinspan and Bertrand Poirot-Delpech, *You've Got to Tell Them: A French Girl's Experience of Auschwitz and After*. Translated by Charles B. Potter. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2018. xvi + 178 pp. Timeline, notes, glossary, and selected readings. \$22.50 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-0-8071-6980-3.

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As in her oral testimonies from 1988 until her passing, Ida Grinspan primarily addresses young people and educators in her written account, *You've Got to Tell Them: A French Girl's Experience of Auschwitz and After* (2018). This translation into English of Grinspan's memoirs *J'ai pas pleuré* (2002) offers a valuable first-hand account for secondary school teachers who wish to introduce adolescents to Nazism, state and individual collaboration, Auschwitz, and the post-Holocaust life of a teenager who lost both of her parents to the gas chambers.[1] Bertrand Poirot-Delpech, a journalist for *Le Monde*, a novelist, and a member of the Académie française, met Grinspan at Auschwitz in 1988, during the survivor's first visit since she left the camp on a Death March in 1945. Grinspan (1929-2018) and Poirot-Delpech (1929-2006) are co-authors, presenting Grinspan's testimony and, at times, a dialogue in which Poirot-Delpech's questions lead Grinspan to expound upon her testimony in areas that she would have unintentionally neglected or intentionally avoided out of "humility" (p. xvi).

The authors composed the book in three sections, which are preceded by the French publisher's preface and a foreword by the authors, and followed by a timeline, the French publisher's afterword, endnotes, a glossary, and a list of selected readings and resources. Part I, "The Jewess of Lié," opens on January 31, 1944, the night of Grinspan's arrest. In the first pages, the authors attempt to draw the readers in by giving a glimpse of the night of arrest, before backtracking to tell the story of Grinspan's parents, who arrived in France from Poland, via Berlin. The couple trusted that France--the country of the Revolution and of tolerance--would be a suitable refuge. As a child, Grinspan (née Fensterzab) learned about antisemitism from her father, who was a victim of pogroms in Poland (p. 6). Grinspan spoke both Yiddish and French. In 1939, the Fensterzabs sent their daughter to live in the country, to spare her from possible bombardments or shortages during the war. The child lived with Alice Marché in Jeune-Lié, in the department of Deux-Sèvres, in the region of Poitou. She attended school in nearby Sompt. The only Jew in the school and in her village, Grinspan remarks that she was completely adopted (p. 10) and that although she was registered as a Jew at the town hall, the mayor personally told her not to wear the star, which had become obligatory for all Jews ages six and older in the Occupied Zone as of June 1942 (p. 16). Grinspan testifies to the courage and generosity of Alice, who attempted to save her from deportation with a falsified baptism

certificate (p. 22), but also notes that the Catholic woman told her that the Jews killed Jesus (p. 12). Relatively isolated from the war in Jeune-Lié, Grinspan learned of the dangers facing Jews in Paris through letters from her father—letters that she took caution to destroy after reading (p. 20). Her mother was arrested in the Vel' d'Hiv roundup of July 1942 (p. 17), and her father was in hiding in Paris.[2] After Grinspan's deportation, her father was denounced and deported on the last train from Drancy to Auschwitz.[3] Both of her parents were killed. Her brother, never arrested, survived. At the age of fourteen, Grinspan was arrested by three French gendarmes (this point is emphasized) as part of a roundup in the Deux-Sèvres department. Part I ends with Grinspan's week at Drancy, the details of which she had forgotten, save her obsession that her coming deportation might mean a reunion with her mother (p. 25). Here and throughout, Poirot-Delpech provides brief notes on significant events of the war, parallel to Grinspan's individual testimony.

The longest of the sections, part II "From a Human to an Item," traces Grinspan's deportation, life in Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Death March, the liberation, her convalescence, and the *épuration* that failed to bring to justice the French police who arrested her. Citing Serge Klarsfeld, the authors give details of the convoy in which Grinspan left Drancy for Auschwitz. Grinspan was one of 674 people in convoy number 68 (p. 25).[4] One of the strengths of the book is the authors' telling of Grinspan's story within a broader picture, whether by providing historical context or by including the experiences of Ida's acquaintances. In the cattle car that took her to the camp, Grinspan states that there was not room to lie down during the three-day journey. The people in the car worked together to provide each other a semblance of privacy as they relieved themselves in the single bucket, which quickly overflowed (p. 32). Nobody tried to escape from her car. To give the broader picture, Grinspan adds that men in other cars attempted to pry up floorboards, but "women stopped them out of fear of reprisals" (p. 33). Regarding the camp, the authors tell of the horrid hygiene conditions, of lice and dysentery, hunger, the cruelty of the *kapos* (common criminals who controlled other inmates) and of prisoners sleeping five to a bed. Grinspan worked in two *kommandos* (work details) in Auschwitz: sorting frozen potatoes and then making grenade parts. Grinspan's account of the factory may be of interest to scholars who work on resistance. She was a witness to the execution of four women who were hanged in the factory for having assisted the revolt of *Sonderkommandos* (prisoners who were forced to take bodies from gas chambers to crematoria). The women provided powder from the factory to the men who successfully exploded a crematorium. Grinspan was also present for Heinrich Himmler's visit, though she remembers little of the SS leader (pp. 61-62). Grinspan was led with other prisoners on a Death March, leaving Auschwitz on January 18, 1945. After a stopover in Ravensbruck, they went to Neustadt-Glewe. Grinspan's feet were gangrenous and she came down with typhus. In the infirmary, she was cared for by a nurse, an interned Polish resister who saved her from amputation (p. 71). After the liberation of the camp, Grinspan received care in hospitals, first in the Russian zone of Germany, and then in France. She writes: "My liberation, my return to lost humanity, can be summed up in this way: clean sheets in the Russian zone, at last men who were 'normal,' whom one might imagine wanting a kiss, a drag of blonde tobacco that makes your head spin, and a glimpse of France, there, between two clouds, beneath the wings of a Dakota" (p. 77). Doctors later sent the survivor to Switzerland to convalesce in the mountains, where she met both Geneviève de Gaulle and Charlotte Delbo (p.129, p. 83). Significantly, the authors include the return to France and "normal life," which involved medical treatment but a complete lack of psychological support (p. 84). They also insist on the fact that by the time Grinspan had recovered, she was seventeen years old and only had a primary school diploma,

meaning that the “chances of entering a profession that matched [her] full potential” were greatly diminished (p. 83). The inclusion of this post-war experience can help young readers to understand the full impact of the Shoah on the lives of survivors. Part II ends with Grinspan’s reaction to returning to Auschwitz, or the “burial site of [her] parents” (p. 177). This section serves as a transition to part III.

Part III, “Then What?,” focuses on Grinspan’s decision to be a witness to the Holocaust and how she chose to transmit memory to young people. Much of the section is structured as a Q&A. The questions this time are not Poirot-Delpech’s, but rather the questions that young people frequently asked Grinspan during her classroom talks or at Auschwitz. Grinspan states that she did not speak openly about her arrest and the camp for decades, because the French were not ready to listen. She remained vague when her daughter asked who put the tattooed number on her arm (p. 132). She began to formally give her testimonial in 1988 because Serge Klarsfeld told her that she could be “useful” on a trip to Auschwitz with French adolescents (pp. 127-128). Grinspan insists that bearing witness was not at all therapeutic for her, but that she did it to be useful (p. 136). She visited Auschwitz twenty times between 1988 and 2001, “always with groups of school-children, to answer their questions” (p. 116). Grinspan also bore witness to counter Holocaust denial and in hopes that her account could serve as a lesson. Although she maintains that the Holocaust was specific because it was a “programmed, scientific, and industrial destruction of a people” (p. 152), she spoke and wrote the book to draw attention to “humanity’s ills” (p. 140) that resulted in other massacres, such as in Cambodia and Rwanda (p. 152). In the penultimate chapter, Poirot-Delpech explains his connection to and expertise on the subject. Besides his friendship with Grinspan and having a Jewish son-in-law whose relatives died in the Holocaust, the journalist had written books and articles on the trials of Klaus Barbie and Maurice Papon (p. 147).^[5] In the last chapter, Grinspan reiterates that her testimonial is “mainly aimed at young people” and states that, for her, witnessing is a “sacred mission” given to her by women at Auschwitz who were soon to die and who told her that if she survived, “you’ve got to tell them” (p. 153).

You’ve Got to Tell Them is especially fitting for secondary school teachers and students. Grinspan notes that while her testimonials have been directed at young people, her biggest influence was on teachers who visited Auschwitz with their students. Teachers learned to better teach the Holocaust (p. 120). The book has a similar potential influence as her in-person testimonial. The glossary and extensive endnotes (not available in the original French edition) are helpful to readers with no prior knowledge of Vichy or of the Occupation in France. The text and the endnotes, however, lack references to works by historians. The selected readings section lists some scholarship, such as that by Jean-Pierre Azéma and Henry Rousso.^[6] The section also points to The Holocaust Education Program Resource Guide and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website.^[7] The LSU jacket cover indicates that the book is “replete with pedagogical resources including a discussion of how and why the Holocaust should be taught.” The reader may be disappointed to find that the “pedagogical resources” are limited to the aforementioned glossary, endnotes, and cursory selected readings. Notwithstanding these limitations, the discussion in part III, particularly in the Q&A style, provides in itself a resource for teachers. High school readers may be particularly interested in this account, given that Grinspan was their age during the war. The book could also serve as a primary text among others for a course on the Holocaust at the undergraduate level.

The reading level is appropriate for adolescents, and the translation in English provides for a

mostly unhindered read. There are some awkward phrases in the translation, such as “like so many animals” (p. 27) instead of “like cattle” for “comme du bétail” (p. 54) and the oddly familiar “How did your being declared at Town Hall go down” (p. 17) for “Comment s’était faite votre déclaration à la mairie” (p. 39). However, Potter provides an overall solid translation.

Poirot-Delpech’s framing of Grinspan’s story poses perhaps the greatest problem of the book. As noted, the account starts with the “action” of Grinspan’s arrest before going back in time, as if to create suspense. This in itself does not detract from the narrative. However, Poirot-Delpech continues throughout the book to add dramatized language when unnecessary: readers understand the gravity of the events through Grinspan’s story itself. The reader encounters this language from the beginning: “A victorious army, though on the point of being beaten, that still can find nothing more urgent to do than to press its subjects to go and round up a little Jewish girl from the Deux-Sèvres in order to send her to hell in Auschwitz! The Homeland of the Arts waging a war to the death against a child, among thousands of others, for the crime of simply having been born!...The circumstance is so atrocious, so unimaginable, that one ends up not imagining it at all, no lightning bolts from the sky, no Wagnerian racket, without even a chorus of mourners” (p. 2). Poirot-Delpech routinely interjects with comments such as “[it’s] enough to make one sick” (p. 98). Readers are unfortunately told how to react, instead of being trusted to come to the affective conclusion by themselves.

The authors stress the responsibility of the French police in the roundups and deportations. Gendarmes who collaborated are called “overzealous backups of barbarism” (p. 19). Instructors who include this book in their courses may want to give more context to explain why there is such a stress on this responsibility. The book alludes to but does not thoroughly explain the myths of a widely resisting French population and France as victim more than collaborator of the Nazis.[8] In 1995, Jacques Chirac officially recognized the responsibility of the French state. The original French edition of the book was published in 2002; therefore, one might think that such a stress on French responsibility would not be necessary. However, as late as 2010, Grinspan confronted “a form of revisionism.” A mayor in France asked a teacher using Grinspan’s testimonial to say “men” arrested her instead of specifically saying “French police.”[9] With this information, readers better understand the authors’ insistence on the role of the French state in the Holocaust.

You’ve Got to Tell Them joins other memoirs of Auschwitz translated into English, such as Primo Levi’s *Survival in Auschwitz*. [10] Grinspan herself notes the difference between her account and Levi’s: Levi was “extremely pessimistic,” whereas Grinspan emphasizes the solidarity she experienced in the camps and on the Death March (p. 131). This account, written six decades after the Holocaust also has the advantage of showing how the survivor shares her story with the third generation. In addition to teachers, the book may interest scholars researching the role of French police at the individual level, the differences in persecution of Jews in villages versus Paris, the life of returning deportees, or the figures of Geneviève de Gaulle, Charlotte Delbo, or Auschwitz resisters.

NOTES

[1] For the original French, see Ida Grinspan and Bertrand Poirot-Delpech, *J’ai pas pleuré* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2002).

[2] For more on the Vel' d'Hiv roundup, see Renée Poznanski, *Les Juifs en France pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, coll. "Biblis," 2018), pp. 316-327.

[3] To read more about the internment camp at Drancy (Paris region) and deportations from there to Auschwitz, see Poznanski, *Les Juifs en France*, pp. 346-353 and pp. 373-386.

[4] Serge Klarsfeld is an historian and known as a Nazi hunter. The authors do not cite a particular source, but see for example Serge Klarsfeld, *La Shoah en France, Tome 1: Vichy-Auschwitz, la "solution finale" de la question juive en France* (Paris: Fayard, 2001).

[5] Bertrand Poirot-Delpech, *Monsieur Barbie n'a rien à dire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987) and *Papon: un crime de bureau* (Paris: Stock, 1998).

[6] Works listed in the selected readings include Jean-Pierre Azéma, *From Munich to the Liberation, 1938-1944* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985) and Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994).

[7] As listed in the selected readings: The Holocaust Education Program Resource Guide, <http://www.holocaust-trc.org/the-holocaust-education-program-resource-guide/holocaust-bibliography/> and The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, <https://www.ushmm.org>

[8] For more on how the myth of Pétain as a shield, protecting France the "victim," was created in the immediate aftermath of the war, see Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order 1940-1944* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972).

[9] <https://www.nouvelobs.com/opinions/20100428.OBS3159/interview-c-est-une-forme-de-revisionnisme.html> Consulted 25 March 2019.

[10] For the English translation of Levi's memoir, see Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1996).

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