



## Outwitting the Gestapo

*Lucie Aubrac , Betsy Wing (Translator) , Konrad Bieber (Translator) , Margaret Collins Weitz (Introduction)*

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**Outwitting the Gestapo** Lucie Aubrac , Betsy Wing (Translator) , Konrad Bieber (Translator) , Margaret Collins Weitz (Introduction)

Lucie Aubrac (1912-2007), of Catholic and peasant background, was teaching history in a Lyon girls' school and newly married to Raymond, a Jewish engineer, when World War II broke out and divided France. The couple, living in the Vichy zone, soon joined the Resistance movement in opposition to the Nazis and their collaborators. *Outwitting the Gestapo* is Lucie's harrowing account of her participation in the Resistance: of the months when, though pregnant, she planned and took part in raids to free comrades—including her husband, under Nazi death sentence—from the prisons of Klaus Barbie, the infamous *Butcher of Lyon*. Her book is also the basis for the 1997 French movie, *Lucie Aubrac*, which was released in the United States in 1999.

### Outwitting the Gestapo Details

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Author : Lucie Aubrac , Betsy Wing (Translator) , Konrad Bieber (Translator) , Margaret Collins Weitz (Introduction)

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## From Reader Review Outwitting the Gestapo for online ebook

### Tim says

This had me teary eyed by the end. Lucie Aubrac and her husband were Jewish members of the French Resistance and this is her account of her life during Nazi occupation. About half way through her husband, betrayed by a traitor, is arrested by the notorious Klaus Barbie, otherwise known as the "Butcher of Lyon". The perilous deeds Lucie puts herself through in attempts to get her husband released are awesome in their bravery and ingenuity. At this point the narrative becomes like a brilliant thriller as plans are made to attack the German convoy transporting her husband from Gestapo headquarters back to prison. She's given such an intimate and beautifully written account of herself and her husband that you're rooting for them as if they were your own family. The bravery of some people is almost beyond belief. A fantastic read.

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### Regina Lindsey says

Lucie Aubrac, a history teacher, and her husband, Raymond, an engineer, decline an opportunity to further their studies in the United States to remain in German occupied France and help start the Resistance work under the Liberation Sud. The work covers the couple's activities during the nine months of Lucie's second pregnancy, is told in diary style, and interspersed with flashbacks to fill in historical context.

It is hard to rate the book. I have been so entrenched in the dark side of humanity during WWII that I really needed to spend some time with some of the heroic stories. I think the fact that Lucie took such risk during her pregnancy captures the imagination as it engendered loyalty among others in the movement, "They know they are going to liberate a man who was one of the leaders of the secret army. I told them, long ago, that he is my husband. They know the strength of my love, my determination, my will to prevail. More than anything else, they are grateful for assuming, despite my pregnancy, the same risks they faced over the past months, and being there tonight with them, fighting with them, fighting just like all the others in the group." (pg 162). No doubt, saving your husband three times from various prisons is an amazing feat. But, I was expecting a peek into the impacts the movement made on the community. Secondly, while I'm typically not a fan of memoirs, the format as well as the early revelation in the introduction of the fate of those involved gave the work a bit of a sterile tone. At times, I had to go back and re-read a passage to absorb the enormity of a scene. On the other hand, at least it didn't have the self aggrandizing tone that is often found in memoirs. Lucie is quick to acknowledge the importance of every work provided for the movement, "Meanwhile, they share their meager provisions, which they must make last an entire week, with strangers who from God knows where. Will their worth be acknowledged someday? I, at least, will loudly proclaim their heroics. Doing without on a daily basis is worth as much as brilliant deeds." (pg 200).

I do think, however, that it is an important read, as there is such limited work on the Resistance due to the security measures in place to work in isolation and use only code names. The reader is given a good understanding of the political nuances regarding the de Gaulle contingency vs. the Nichy government. Further, despite the security measures the work does an excellent job of showing the infrastructure in place for the Resistance, "When you step on an anthill, the surviving ants rush in to put everything back in order and reestablish all connections in their society. Every time we experience a new blow, we do the same thing. In our shadowy world, everything frequently has to be started all over again." (pg 62). Finally, the English translation is superb.

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## Paul says

The memoirs of Resistance fighter Lucie Aubrac dated mostly in 1943, when she was pregnant with her second child, Catherine. Lucie's story is written (and/or translated) in an entertaining style. I was at first disappointed with her low-key account of the assault of which she was a part on the German truck which released her husband Raymond from incarceration and ultimately execution. The reason however becomes clear later in the book; Lucie views the attack as merely one of countless acts of resistance by the movement. It is the key event in the book and she sacrifices dramatic impact for integrity; I guess though I can't argue with that.

Two small criticisms: the library photos which don't connect with the events or people in the book (there isn't a single photograph of Raymond), and the weak English title (the French is "Ils Partiront Dans L'Ivresse" or "They will leave with elation", taken from a coded message from London to signal the Aubracs' flight from France to Britain early in 1944).

Raymond Aubrac died in Paris during our visit in 2012. His death generated my interest in his story and that of his wife Lucie. This is a fascinating insight into the wartime exploits of surely one of the greatest women of the 20th century.

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## Sydney Young says

Quite frankly, Yes, this blew my mind, and I want to shout at everyone I know to READ THIS (or listen, as I did; the narration is sublime). It's a must read book. It's old, but I was looking about something on Lyon, France, where I studied abroad during law school and incidentally learned some about the resistance. It always has amazed me that a popular historical novel about Lyon during WWII doesn't exist in English (that I know of, so if you know of one please please tel me). Non-fiction and surreal, considering the difference in how I listened to it now verses several years ago. Important stuff, and what a woman!!!

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## Riley says

This memoir of the French Resistance is a good reminder of the bravery that people of principle can show, even in the darkest of times. It is humbling to think about, considering how easy it is to accommodate. In Lucie Aubrac's case, she and her husband chose to remain in France even though they had an out. I'd ask myself whether I would do the same, but I'm not sure if I'd like the answer.

From the book:

"[Her husband] Raymond Samuel was of Jewish origin; his ancestors had come from Poland at the beginning of the eighteenth century. After the collapse of the French army in 1940, and following his own escape from a prisoner-of-war camp, his professors in Boston offered him a job as an assistant. I still had my fellowship, so in September 1940 we applied for American visas in order to go to the United States. But then we changed our minds; could we really leave our families and our friends behind, while our country was occupied by the Germans?"

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## Divinebooks says

I found myself not believing Lucie Aubrac, and felt it read more like a diary of a collaborator than one who bravely fought against the Nazis.

I felt guilty for thinking this of her. She's a true character in history. I couldn't help but google her afterwards to find, that her heroic acts have been questioned by many others who are rather dubious of her accounts.

Many people 'close' to her in the resistance get arrested and killed, the Nazis always seem to know where her friends in the resistance are going to be. She rarely lacks food, drink and cigarettes, and her husband get's arrested by the Gestapo and she has a meeting with the Gestapo. I think a deal was struck there. One does not have a meeting with the Gestapo unless they become a collaborator. This is my humble opinion, and I hope I am wrong. I'm not going to sit in judgement of this woman, she had a baby and was pregnant, at the time when she met with the Gestapo. Never underestimate what a mother will do to keep her family alive. I think she sold the poor doctor who saved her husband to the nazis. I think that is why her husband and her were up all night crying. War is a horrible thing, and it can make best of people go bad, even members of the French Resistance. I think Lucie and her husband started off good, with the best of intentions and then were caught by the Gestapo. The choice they had was die, and your children die, or continue in the French Resistance and feed us the information we need. Or who knows maybe they were double agents, but I think they sacrificed the doctor to save their family, as well as other members of the French Resistance.

I did not enjoy reading what felt like a lie. Or perhaps it wasn't a lie, and the brave woman just wasn't very good at telling her story.

In which case she needed a good ghost writer. None the less, I read it in French, so it was an interesting challenge to read something in French from such a troubled time in history. I do think it's worth reading. Who knows maybe some of it's merit was lost in translation.  
Divine

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### **Keri says**

I do not know how I got this book and it has been sitting by my bedside for a while but I finally got desperate to read something. This book was very interesting to me. It probably is well written in French but there are a few things that seem confusing or out of order. However it is well worth reading. A first hand account of the French resistance and an interesting life at challenging times makes good reading even for a person who prefers fiction and literature.

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### **Vanessa Couchman says**

The story of Lucie Aubrac and how she was able to spring her husband from the clutches of the Gestapo in wartime Lyon is well known via the 1990s film. This memoir was written after the war, since it was too dangerous for Resistance members to keep a diary. I found it fascinating, not only because real life stories are often more outlandish than fiction, but also because it provides details of daily life in occupied France.

The fact that it was written after the events described does make me wonder if there was a certain amount of post hoc rationalisation going on. And the real history of that period has sometimes been obscured by the post-war myths that grew up around the Resistance. At times, I found the narrative confusing and had to keep looking at the date to see where we were.

But, overall, I found this book a valuable piece in the jumbled mosaic of which the history of the French Resistance is composed. I read the English edition and I would like to read it again in the original French.

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### **P.S. Winn says**

Adventure and heart touching moments fill this book that tells the life story of Lucie Aubrac in a terrible time on history. Lucie's was a part of the Resistance. Even in pregnancy, she took her part in raids to free others, including her husband, trying to get him away from Klaus Barbie. This is one to pick up and hopefully let people know we should never forget this dark part of history so it will never happen again.

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### **Alan Cook says**

A good book about war shows the savagery and mindlessness of warfare. Lucie Aubrac's book does that. The book takes place in France during 1943 when Lucie, despite being pregnant, was trying to get her husband out of a German-run prison in Lyon. She was helped by many people in the French resistance, but it was her daring in approaching Nazis like Klaus Barbie, the "butcher of Lyon" to get an audience with her husband that allowed the commando raid that she was part of to take place. They freed a number of prisoners, including her husband, Raymond. The French resistance was instrumental in saving people and hurting the German war effort, despite others who kowtowed to the Germans.

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### **Ashley Lauren says**

Lucie Aubrac was one kick-a, bad-a lady.

*Germans on my doorstep? Whatever, I'll just lie to their face.*

*Nazis capture my (Jewish) husband? NBD, I'll just march up to Klaus Barbie and give him a piece of my mind.*

*Pregnant? Psh, I'll go on raids and rescue missions until I start having labor pains.*

Seriously, there's a book (and I guess, a movie) about Lucie Aubrac (aka: Catherine, Lucie Bernard, Lucie Samuels, etc) for good reason. She did some incredible things as part of the Resistance in France in WWII. Add on top of it that this diary-style book captures the nine months of her pregnancy - when her husband is captured and she helps mastermind his rescue - and you have one hell of a story.

So why only three stars? Unfortunately, this book is a prime example of how poor writing can turn something as exciting as Lucie Aubrac's life into a history book. I don't know if Lucie's writing style was a bit silted or (what I think is more likely) the translation was poor. Excitement comes across as corny and all of the events are discordant and often confusing. Everything felt like it was in fast forward. Before the emotions of fear or anxiety or hope could squeeze in the action had already changed. I ended up skimmed much of the end of the book.

I'm pretty die-hard when it comes to WWII memoirs - if you're that way too, you may find this enjoyable. If

not, I wouldn't recommend picking it up. I think it's important to know who Lucie Aubrac is - do a little research - but, unfortunately, her memoir falls flat.

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## Merrickay says

This is the third book I have read on the French Resistance, which I am finding to be a fascinating subject. The first book was fiction, the second more of a personal although very educational journal. This third book is written in journal form but is giving me much more history about the formation of the Resistance. It is giving me a big picture of the breadth of the Resistance, both inside and outside of France, as well as in both occupied France and free France. More forms of resistance are described way beyond propagandizing, education, and recruitment and on into freeing prisoners, and other military operations. In other words, forming an active and national army of resistance. Attention is given to the large number of groups with different perspectives and goals. The difficulties uniting the units into a common one working together is especially interesting to me. Can you imagine when one group with no weapons is in a better position strategically to carry out an operation, getting a better armed group to give them their weapons? It came to mind last night when I was listening to Obama on Charlie Rose, explaining the difficulty of understanding things that were happening if you did not have ALL of the information available to him and others, indeed if you had "not sat in that room" with all of the briefings. This intelligence gathering, information sharing, and policy making was of course also greatly hampered not only by the political disagreements, but by the circumstances of war and occupation. Even when communication systems were developed, there were constant arrests which meant everything had to be developed all over again with different sources, resources and people recruited.

Remember the old saying that Ginger Rogers did everything Fred did only backwards and in high heels? Well Lucie Aubrac did it all pregnant while caring for a small son. Altho, as I sit reading about Aubrac's plan to liberate her husband from the Nazis, I look across at my husband and think poor thing, he would have been doomed. I don't think I have that kind of courage. I think I might have the courage to fight in the moment of capture, to hit and kick and shoot even if I had a gun, but the courage to plan a sneak attack involving me crossing borders and bribing Nazis? Not so much. Especially when said Nazi is Klaus Barbie.

This book has excellent footnoting relating journal entries to facts of history and events of the time. It is very helpful for me as I have no knowledge of French history. Wish there had not been so many cute guys in my one world history class to distract me. As for the history class Aubrac is teaching during the Resistance, she is addressing ancient history and her Jewish students light up when they hear the names Mesopotamia, Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, Abraham, Moses, etc. and the Catholic students find interest in the tablets of law. "My young students recognize each other as equals in the identity of a faith that originated with the nomad shepherds of the desert." Then on to studying metal industries of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. and the students realize "industrial power is on the side of the Allies."

This book just kept getting better and better. I was a nervous wreck for the last one third or so as the action increased. It's been a very long time since a book made me so physically tense.

The main thing that happened for me in reading this, is turning my grade school education about history and especially war, especially war of one country against another country, into a much more realistic picture of the intricacies and number of groups, alignments, complicated politics, etc. involved. Not everyone in France supported the fight against the Nazis of course, just as every German did not support the Nazis. Some people think the Aubracs were heroes, some think they were traitors. It reminds me once again of the foolishness of becoming involved in the politics of other countries where one cannot possibly understand all of these intricacies. I don't know the truth of these stories but this was one good book. Five stars.

## **Gretchen says**

read years ago...enjoyed

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## **Melissa says**

Translated version of Lucie's part in the Resistance in France during WWII. She was a Catholic and her husband was Jewish but he had also been part of the Resistance so he was using an assumed name which hid his Jewish identity. Nonetheless he was captured by the Gestapo and Lucie goes to Klaus Barbie with help from a German go-between. It had a happy ending and Lucie lived to be 94 and her husband Raymond lived to be 97. Very interesting, very well-written. Definitely recommend.

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## **John Fullerton says**

I found this book quite remarkable for the ordinariness of courage on the part of a woman who is superficially conventional in every way: she's a French Roman Catholic, happily married, with a child she adores. She describes in an understated, self-deprecating way her role in the Resistance: walking into a prison to try to get a comrade out in broad daylight, befriending an SS officer, taking part in an armed raid in the streets to rescue another resistance member, a Sten submachine gun across her knees as she waits to spring the ambush. At any moment she can expect to be betrayed, shot down or arrested and tortured to death. The knock on the door could come at any time. The tone is flat, the very antithesis of dramatic. She survives, remarkably. So does her husband - a senior figure in the Resistance - along with their son. The reader asks one question throughout, over and over: would I have the guts, the self-discipline and conviction to do this? Very few of us would, I suspect.

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