

Concentration Camp de Gurs Concentration Camp du Vernet

Camp de Gurs, in southern France, had been a camp for refugees from the Spanish Civil War. After the French defeat, it became the largest concentration camp for Jews in France, and transit point for deportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau and Sobibór death camps in Poland. Camp de Gurs was liberated in the summer of 1944. The French poet Louis Aragon said, "Gurs is a strange sound, like a moan stuck in the throat." Camp du Vernet, in the south of France near Pamiers in Ariège, held 12,000 Spaniards of the Durruti Division after their defeat in the Civil War. Also among the inmates was the writer Arthur Koestler who described its terrible conditions. Beginning in 1940 the Vichy regime used it as a detention center for foreigners considered suspect or dangerous. In 1942 it became a transit camp for French Jews. The last group of Camp du Vernet prisoners were deported to Dachau in June 1944.

An envelope canceled January 29, 1941, went from a Jewish resident of Albi, Vichy France, to a Jewish prisoner at Camp de Gurs, where it was opened, examined, resealed, and marked by the camp censor. A May 28, 1941, postal card from a Yugoslav inmate at Camp du Vernet to the United States consulate at Marseilles was passed by the camp censor before posting.



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