

Concentration Camp du Vernet Assembly and Detention Camp Drancy

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. On August 21, 1941, Drancy, a northeast suburb of Paris, became the location of an assembly and detention camp for Jews. From June 22, 1942, until July 31, 1944, almost 65,000 Jews were transported from Drancy to Auschwitz-Birkenau and Sobibór death camps in Poland. At first Drancy was administered by French collaborators, but on July 2, 1943, German Nazi SS official Alois Brunner took command, after which conditions for inmates deteriorated catastrophically. Solidarity and organized resistance were strong among the inmates, and made possible 41 successful escapes. Drancy was liberated on August 17, 1944.

A May 28, 1941, air mail letter from a Camp du Vernet prisoner to New York, with camp censor marks front and back. A September 19, 1941, letter from a Jewish prisoner at Drancy to his wife at Paris. The octagonal purple censor's cachet of the East Paris guard force, Brigade No. 93 of Drancy, is less common than later Drancy censor markings recorded in the literature.



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