

Concentration Camp de Gurs

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 a 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."

This letter from a Jewish prisoner at Camp de Gurs to the Fédération des Sociétés Juives de France (FSJF, Federation of French Jewish Organizations) at Nice, requests a prayer book; a brief note at the end of the letter says that the requested item was shipped on March 8, 1941, which is also the date of the postmark on the attached certificate of mailing. Besides relief work, FSJF organized anti-Nazi work among Jews, and created the Comité Général de Défense (Jewish Defense Committee) in August 1943, which embraced all underground Jewish organizations including conservatives, Zionists, and Communists.

