

# May 10, 1940: ERNST'S ARREST & FLIGHT FROM BELGIUM

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**CONTEXT:** Ernst Feigl, whose office was in nearby Antwerp, decided he must go to work May 10, 1940, the day of the [German invasion](#), to pay employees. At the North Railway station in Brussels, Ernst was arrested by Belgian authorities. Even though he had a valid Belgian ID card, he also had a German passport which caused authorities to suspect he was a German infiltrator. Held first at *Tir National*, a military barracks in Brussels, Ernst was visited by Peter and Agnes who brought him a suitcase with some clothes, a blanket, and food. Rumors abounded about where Ernst and others similarly detained would be taken. Ultimately Ernst was among those who were evacuated on cattle cars May 12, 1940, to the [Saint-Cyprien camp](#) in the south of France.

At the same time, Agnes, her stepmother, Flora (Peter's "Alala"), and Peter fled Belgium for Paris where Anneli Blumberg, Flora's daughter--Agnes' half-sister--lived. Along with thousands of others, they followed the coastline into France. Peter recalled German [Stuka](#) dive bombers strafing the refugee-laden roads. As an eleven-year-old boy already obsessed with airplanes, Peter thought little of danger even when forced into ditches for safety or upon seeing casualties. He just wanted to be at the *Stuka's* controls himself!

Peter remembered vividly going through Dunkirk at night and all he could see were flames. After nearly ten days of travel, Agnes, Flora, and Peter arrived at Joseph and Anneli's Paris apartment. Peter, exhausted, fell soundly asleep. But not for long. Agnes, who upon hearing the air raid sirens howling, decided they were no safer than before. She, Peter, and Flora managed to get standing room on a train to Bordeaux in the south of France, where soon all rail traffic would be halted due to the destruction of bridges.

As it turned out, France would be defeated within a month and an armistice signed on June 22, 1940, which divided France—including Paris--into a German-occupied zone in the north and Vichy, a French-governed collaborationist government, in the south.

Map image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons, context from pp. 21-22 & 26 **ENFANTS DÉPORTÉS, ENFANTS SAUVÉS: LES PETITS RÉFUGIÉS JUIFS DU GERS [DEPORTED CHILDREN, SAVED CHILDREN: THE YOUNG JEWISH REFUGEES IN GERS]**, excerpted with permission of author, Gisèle Polya-Somogyi. English translation for context courtesy of Peter Feigl. Additional context from Peter Feigl's USC Shoah Foundation's oral history testimony recorded April 18, 1997.