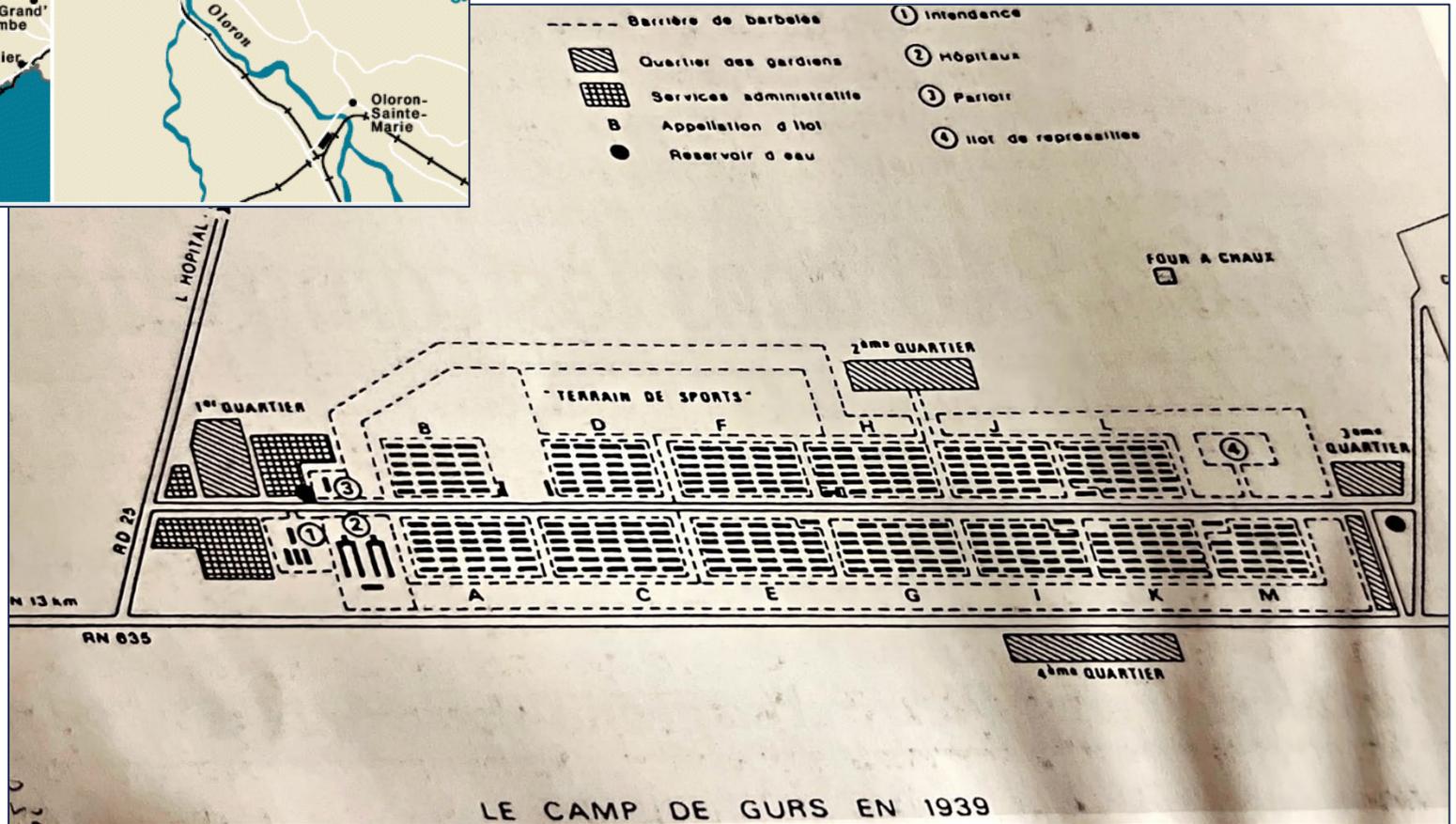
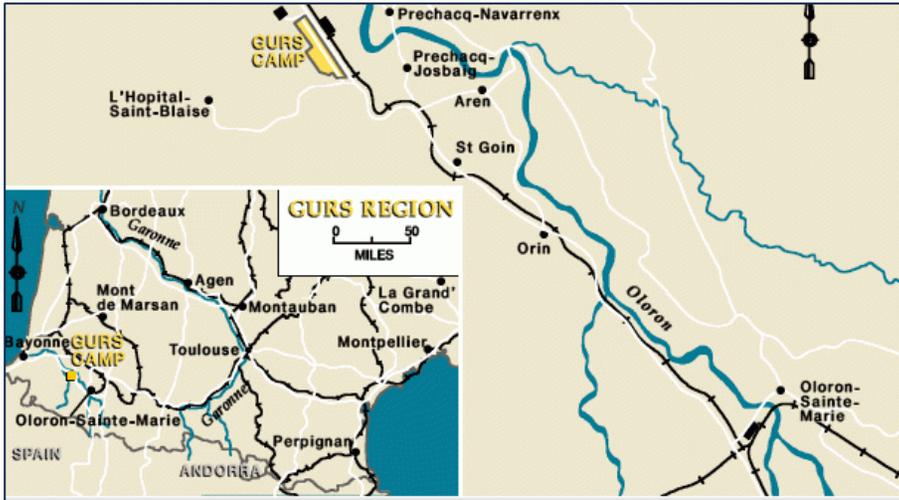


MAY/JUNE 1940: DETAINMENT IN GURS CAMP

P. 24 ENFANTS DÉPORTÉS, ENFANTS SAUVÉS: LES PETITS RÉFUGIÉS JUIFS DU GERS

Map courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum



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Map courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

CONTEXT: Arriving in Bordeaux, France, after fleeing from Paris, Agnes went to the local French police station to register herself, Flora, and Peter as foreigners as required by law. The French policeman directed her to the *Prefecture*, a French administrative office located in each of France's [departments](#). There the official told her to travel to Oloron-Sainte-Marie. When they arrived, they were aghast to be met by armed French soldiers who loaded everyone onto trucks and drove them to the Gurs Camp, which was over 1 ½ miles in length with 450 wooden barracks lined up on each side of a roadway.

Barracks Blocks I to M as shown on the image were designated for women and children. Agnes, Flora, and Peter were assigned to Block I. Agnes was named chief of Barrack 66 I because she was fluent in French and could translate between the French camp officials and detainees. By June 23, 1940, Gurs held 9,283 women and almost 300 children. Peter remembered the conditions were very primitive and food almost non-existent.

According to [Article XIX of the Armistice Agreement](#) signed on June 22, 1940, after the fall of France, the French were required to “surrender upon demand all Germans named by the German Government in France...” The Gurs commander, Davergne, knowing that most of the detained Germans in Gurs were Jewish or political opponents of the Reich, burned all the camp archives on June 24. Nothing was saved or preserved. It all was burned.

Thus, when a German inspection team came to Gurs on June 30, 1940, Agnes made an audacious bluff by brandishing her German passport which was not marked with a [J for Jewish](#) and angrily insisted that as a German national she be released immediately from “this filthy French camp.” Taken aback, a German official allowed them to leave by taxi within the hour.

Gurs image and context from pp. 23-26 *ENFANTS DÉPORTÉS, ENFANTS SAUVÉS: LES PETITS RÉFUGIÉS JUIFS DU GERS [DEPORTED CHILDREN, SAVED CHILDREN: THE YOUNG JEWISH REFUGEES IN GERS]* are excerpted with permission of author, Gisèle Polya-Somogyi. English translation courtesy of Peter Feigl. Additional context from Peter Feigl's USC Shoah Foundation's oral history testimony recorded April 18, 1997. Map courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.