

## SEPTEMBER 20, 1940: PETER (PIERRE) REGISTERS FOR SCHOOL IN AUCH

P. 43 ENFANTS DÉPORTÉS, ENFANTS SAUVÉS: LES PETITS RÉFUGIÉS JUIFS DU GERS



Rue de Metz School. Upper class. 1940-1941 School Year. Top to bottom, 1st row: X, Dulau, Cérés, Le Canut, Couret, Feigl, X, Arnaud, Lacoste, Sternefeld. 2nd row: X, Cointepas, Mora, Maurin, Knaebel, X, Dupouy, Branet, Cazes, X, X, Canut. 3rd row: Guilhem, Faure, X, Vivent, Mathias, Pefray. 4th row: Castaing, Duchamps, Dubourdieu, Fontano, Heng, Mathias, Platon, X, Lloret.

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**Context:** Agnes Feigl registered Peter as Pierre, the French equivalent of Peter, at *Rue de Metz* School in Auch, France, on September 20, 1940, for the 1940-1941 school year. Classmate Robert Lacoste (in image, top row, second from right) in an interview decades later said that since religion wasn't discussed in secular schools, he was "quite ignorant of antisemitism...and the persecutions from which they [Jewish refugees] were fleeing." Peter said integration into the class was not difficult but that he kept to himself because he couldn't discuss having spent the summer interned at the Gurs camp or that his father was still in detention.

What was not known when this photo was taken in the 1940-1941 school year: Robert Lacoste's father, by order of the Gers *Prefect* for whom he worked, would assist on August 26, 1942, in sending Peter's parents to the Le Vernet detention and transit camp, in essence, a stop on the way to Drancy, France's main deportation site to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Lacoste's father was later himself deported for "activities in the resistance movement," as was the father of Canut (far right, 2<sup>nd</sup> row from top). Renè Branet (nicknamed Ninet, fifth from right, 2<sup>nd</sup> row from top) died July 7, 1944, as a member of the maquis (resistance fighters).

Photo p. 43 and context pp. 42-44 *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.