



COURT OF HONOR

Since the transformation of this former abbey into a central prison in 1803, the court of honor symbolizes the enduring usefulness of this confined place. The space simultaneously provides lodging for the direction, a detention area and an administrative building where the prison personnel work on a daily basis.

After passing over the prison's entry porch ("caserne"), the condemned persons cross this court, the last connection between the life outside and the detention areas. Henceforth, they are subjected to the sole, strict rule of the penitentiary, Vichy's regime reserving for political prisoners conditions even more severe than those of the common criminals.

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Sources : Amicale des anciens détenus patriotes de la centrale d'Eysses, *L'insurrection d'Eysses*, éditions sociales, 1974. Corinne Jaladieu, *La prison politique sous Vichy. L'exemple des centrales d'Eysses et de Rennes*, L'Harmattan, 2007.

- **The Choice of Eysses**

On October 26, 1943 a circulated letter signed by the secretary general of the police, R. Bousquet, commands a transfer to the Eysses penitentiary (reputedly well-guarded and in a tranquil rural environment) of all the resisters condemned by the special tribunals of the Southern Zone for leading "communists, terrorists, anarchists or subversives." Several convoys also arrived from the Northern Zone, amongst them 100 prisoners transferred from the Santé (another French prison) on February 12, 1944.

- **The Marseille train ("Train de la Marseillaise")**

The last minors from the school for surveyed education having been evacuated in 1942, the common law criminals still occupying the prison are massively relieved in October 1943 by hundreds of shackled resisters transferred from prisons of the Southern Zone, notably by the Marseille train. This adds about two hundred administrative interns imprisoned without judgment (revealing the arbitrariness that then prevailed).

- **Who are the prisoners of Eysses?**

In deciding to regroup 1200 resisters at Eysses, Vichy's authorities, ordinarily very mindful of security, fostered, despite themselves, an exceptional abundance. The prison thus concentrates a very representative sample of those imprisoned for political reasons under Vichy's regime: men of all social and geographical origins belonging to the Resistance in all of its diversity (communists, Gaullists, socialists, Christians, Jews or atheists, union members, Spanish republicans...) Once concentrated at Eysses, it is the combination of their experiences, the collective struggles experienced in different prisons, that explains the development of the organization born there. This penitentiary becomes a crucible...

- **Surveillance Personnel**

The entry building, also called "barracks", mainly contains the quarters of the surveillance personnel, the exterior guard being provided for primarily by the GMR (Groupes mobiles de Réserve, militarized police units created by the Vichy government) after January 1944.

At Eysses, unlike other prisons, the occupation forces coming from Agen will only intervene on the night of February 19, 1944, the day of the insurrection.

- **Staff Housing**

The staff housing, in the west wing, is intended for part of the administrative staff: the director of the penitentiary, the deputy director, and the financial administrator.

Two men succeeded to the position of director at Eysses between 1940 and 1944: Jean-Baptiste Lassalle who illustrates the instance of old servants of a republican penitentiary administration staying in place under Vichy until January 1944, then Joseph Schivo, fanatic militiaman and personal friend of the Secretary General of law enforcement, Joseph Darnand.

After the failure of the collective insurrection on February 19, 1944, some of the resister inmates are going to be "interrogated" in these caves, located under Schivo's apartment.