



THE CENTRAL WALKWAY

The central walkway accesses the different spaces of the prison, from the court of honor to the infirmary. Most notably, it permits access to the kitchen and to the workshops, ensuring daily deliveries.

It is in borrowing this central walkway that 54 inmates from the segregated quarters, of which the majority had not joined the Collective of inmates, will get to escape on January 3, 1944 (east gate).

At the time of the collective escape attempt of 1200 inmates on February 19, 1944, a group led by G. Pelouze will fight with weapons in hand to try and force passage to the eastern watchtower. Louis Aulagne will be mortally wounded in this fight.

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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 Uprising of December 9, 10, and 11, 1943, also called the “Three Glories”**
At the time of an uprising on the 9th, 10th and 11th of December 1943, the political prisoners (more than a thousand) manage to prevent the transfer to the Northern Zone (and the probable “delivery” to the Nazis) of 150 administrative internees. These three days named “The Three Glories” by the inmates stand out as a founding event of the “Eysses Battalion”: the first victory won against the repressive authorities. They also mark the discovery of the inmates’ secret organization by the hierarchy of the penitentiary.
- **The Escape of Kléber**
Exterior assistance is indispensable to the success of the ambitious plan for collective escape. Without doubt, the most outstanding episode is the escape on December 23, 1943, of inmate Fenoglio, called Kléber, who is chosen by the direction of the Collective to establish links with the Resistance outside of the prison. The FTPF military commander Jeannot (his real name was Jean Richon) furnished a gas-fueled truck covered by a tarp to Gérard Bouvard, leader in Villeneuve of the Liberation movement, who, after many episodes, succeeds in driving the vehicle through the eastern gate of the prison, as official supplier of the prison. After having unloaded a part of the cargo at the shoe workshop, under the benevolent surveillance of Gaston Dumas and other resistant guards, he loads Kléber, camouflaged under wood chips and various parcels. The exit and the ensuing search frighten the team, though they finally cross the gates of the prison and reach the home of G. Bouvard, which is only a few meters from a Vichy police commissioner.
After his escape, Kléber meets with a leader of the Combat movement (Joly) who must give him a stock of weapons but will not do so under the pretext “*that the Eysses resistants are communists*” (according to the account of Serge Ravanel).
- **The Escape of 54 by the Eastern Gate**
The political prisoners of the segregated quarters, arriving for the most part during the summer of 1943, before the mass arrival of the other resistants, have already constructed an escape plan and refuse to integrate it with the collective organization, fearing an infiltration on the part of the communists and/or considering an escape of several hundred prisoners to be unfeasible.
On January 3, 1944, 54 of these inmates succeed in escaping with the aid of two prison guards. Some of them are then going to rejoin the outside Resistance and participate in the battles of the Liberation. Following this escape, a new director is named, the militiaman Joseph Schivo.
From his arrival, Schivo tightens the noose around the collective and the meticulous preparation of the collective escape, which has been prepared for several months and is at risk of being reduced to nothing at every moment. He threatens death to the inmates who oppose him with any resistance, and multiple altercations take place. The internal situation becomes unacceptable for the collective, which then decides to seize the first opportunity to attempt an exit. This attempt takes place on February 19, 1944.