



## MEMORIAL HALL

Thanks to the will of Bernard Coste (director of the prison from 2002-2006), a memorial hall was inaugurated at the entrance of the Eysses Penitentiary in September 2006. Through a selection of documents and objects, it retraces the history of the place, from the Benedictine abbey to present day. There, one can see photos taken at different periods, the staff records...but also objects emblematic of prison life, like an anthropometric chair, a pair of wooden clogs (an element of the prison suit), the wooden cup awarded to the inmates of Yard 4 on the occasion of the "Celebration of Youth" in January 1944...; the centerpiece of this room being the restoration of one of the "chicken coops." This hall is one of the elements of the memorial policies put in place by former prisoners of Eysses since 1945 through their association, united under the slogan "Unis comme à Eysses" ("United as at Eysses").

**Authors :** AERI team - Meghan Briggs (translations).

**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. « Si hauts que soient les murs », exposition au musée de Gajac, Villeneuve-sur-Lot, 2002. Site officiel de l'Association nationale pour la mémoire des résistants emprisonnés à Eysses (<http://www.eysses.fr>). Jean-Pierre Koscielniak « Eysses et ses lieux de mémoire » in cédérom *La Résistance en Lot-et-Garonne*, AERI, 2011.

- **Return to Eysses**

The years after the war are at once marked by the will for justice, the need to find oneself, and the struggle carried out for the recognition of the rights of former inmates. It is in August 1945 that the first congress of "The Association of Former Patriot Inmates of the Eysses Central Prison" takes place in Villeneuve-sur-Lot. The association's newsletter, entitled "United as at Eysses" is born in June of the same year. Announcing births, marriages, and deaths, this bulletin shows that life reasserts itself.

- **The association**

The association organizes parties, balls, gala evenings, and later on, cruises: opportunities for the former inmates to meet again. It commits itself, faithful to the spirit of Eysses, to a battle for liberty and democracy, while working to recognize the rights of its members. Overcoming divisions, the Association of Former Patriots and Resistants of the Eysses FFI Battalion celebrates and perpetuates since 1945 the spirit that animated the inmates during their incarceration in the prison. It recalls their spirit of tolerance, the system of solidarity that they put in place at the prison, the struggle that they led for dignity and for the protection of their liberties, the sacrifice of certain men among them. The association also denounces war crimes and calls for vigilance towards all forms of extremism. As a place of memory, the wall of the executed became the yearly meeting place for the members of the association.

- **Acts of Justice**

As soon as its incorporation in 1945, the association of the former Eysses prisoners strives for the condemnation of the militiaman director Schivo, his wife, and his two guards from the militia corps. They appear in front of the Court of Justice of Lot-et-Garonne on March 13, 1946; the men are executed, and Madame Schivo sees her sentence commuted – as is the custom for women – from forced labor for life to twenty years of forced labor.

Shortly after this execution, the floor of the court of justice is seized by the association's demand for measures taken against Lieutenant Martin – commander of the firing squad – and against the guard Dupin, denouncer of nine of the executed inmates. The efforts of the association and the accusatory act that it leads to result in the condemnation of Dupin in December 1948 to life-long forced labor, but his sentence is rapidly commuted. He is freed in April 1952; regarding Lieutenant Martin, he escapes his charge. Effectively, the commissioner considers that no penal proceedings can be justified juridically on his part, because he simply applied the orders he received from Hornus, the police superintendent.

- **The Recognition of Individual and Collective Resistant Action**



The recognition of resistant action arises for two reasons, collective and individual. The battle for collective recognition is rapidly crowned with success. On November 24, 1947, the quality of an FFI unit is acknowledged under the designation of "Battalion FFI of the Eysses Central Prison" given to the fighting formation constituted by the members of the Resistance incarcerated at the Eysses central prison. A second battle then commences, in order to recognize the "Battalion" of Eysses as a Combat Unit.; the demands are laid out to this end in 1957, 1970, and 1985. At last, the request succeeds on April 20, 1990; the FFI battalion of the Eysses central prison is then a recognized Combat Unit for "the actions of the Three Glories, starting on December 9, 1943, preventing the delivery of the administrative internees to the Northern Zone, and on February 19 having the goal of rejoining the exterior resistance.

The help with individual recognition of the titles granting pension constitutes the second part of this action. Beyond the legal counsel given since the Liberation, the office of the association duly calls, in 1950, on each to make note of his state of health in order to be able to perceive rights and benefits. If the claim must be addressed individually, the association's secretariat contributes substantial aid and centralizes the files and documents.

#### ▪ **Memorial Work**

In 1947, Roger Ferrand's brochure "Revolt at the Eysses Central Prison" is published, in the editions Yesterday and Today, first in the France collection "Heroic Youth."

Several years are necessary for the former prisoners of Eysses until the realization of a memorial including a list of all the political inmates of Eysses. It is achieved during the 10<sup>th</sup> Congress in 1954, followed by the publication of the first book in 1962; the first edition in 5000 copies is rapidly exhausted; the book is reedited twice. The last edition of the book was finished in 1992, with a new title: *Eysses Against Vichy (1940-...)*

In 1965, the disc of Eysses retracing "the insurrection of February 19" is published. The film made at Villeneuve-sur-Lot and at Eysses in February 1986 is released in January 1987, under the title "Eysses, A Prison in the Resistance."

An exposition entitled "As High as the Walls" took place at the Gajac Museum in Villeneuve-sur-Lot, in correlation with a symposium, co-organized with the ENAP in Agen in February 2002, consecrated to the Resistance in prison. A work dedicated to the thirteen victims of February 19 and 23, 1944 is released under the title *Twelve Executed for the Republic*.

Today, the interest in Eysses continues through internet sites, books, and music still. Thus, in 2010, a rock group from Villeneuve, Massey-Fergusound System, composes a song about the history of Eysses and entitles it "*Devoir de mémoire*" (Duty of Memory).

#### **References to books :**

- Jean-Guy Modin, *Le bataillon d'Eysses. D'après les témoignages et documents des anciens détenus patriotes d'Eysses*, Amicale des anciens détenus patriotes de la centrale d'Eysses, 1962.

- Amicale des anciens détenus patriotes de la Centrale d'Eysses (avec le concours de Jean-Guy Modin), *L'insurrection d'Eysses : 19-23 février 1944 : une prison dans la Résistance : d'après les témoignages et documents d'anciens détenus patriotes (FFI 1943-1945)* - 2e édition, Editions sociales, 1974.

- Michel Reynaud, Jean Cantaloup et Jean Ringeval, *Eysses contre Vichy 1940-...*, Editions Tiresias, 1992.

- Corinne Jaladieu et Michel Lautisser, *Douze fusillés pour la République. Récits historiques et témoignages*, Association pour la mémoire d'Eysses, 2004.

- Corinne Jaladieu, *La Prison politique sous Vichy – L'exemple des centrales d'Eysses et de Rennes*, éd. L'Harmattan, coll. « Logiques sociales – Déviance et société », 289 p.

#### ▪ **Memorial Places**

Since the Liberation, the places of the political prisoners' suffering become the "lieux de mémoire" (Pierre Nora) – or "memorial places."

More recently, they were strengthened by the monuments intended, in the town of Villeneuve-sur-Lot itself, to perpetuate the memory of the events of February 19, 1944. In the Saint Catherine Cemetery of Villeneuve-sur-Lot, a memorial depicting the map of France with the names of the dead overlooks an urn with ashes that come from Dachau. The wall encircling the prison, against which the execution poles were raised, became the Mur des Fusillés (Wall of the Executed). In April 1996, an order of the prefect of the region classifies it in the inventory of historical monuments. On February 29, 2004, a monument created by the artist Jean-Claude Maurel depicting 12 silhouettes in front of an execution pole is inaugurated at



Villeneuve-sur-Lot, Revolution Square. Finally, in June 2006, a marble stele to the memory of the executed, work of Thomas Stéphanello, is erected in front of the Town Hall, Anatole France Square. Villeneuve-sur-Lot has additionally given to several of its streets or squares the name of resisters who passed between the walls of its prison (Henri Auzias, Stéphane Fuchs, Paul Weil, Victor Michaut, Pierre Doize...). The creation of a museum about detention at Eysse is currently under consideration.