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# **The minor detainees in the house of supervised education of the prisons of Fresnes, 1929-1958**

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## **Abstract**

The house of supervised education of the prisons of Fresnes opened in 1929. It actually corresponded to a prison district reserved for minor detainees. But in 1930, a technique of observation and evaluation was developed to organize an orientation of the minors to other penitentiary institutions. They were evaluated by a team consisting of a teacher, a doctor, a social worker and a psychiatrist. The goal was to create a file on the minor and then transmit it to a juvenile judge. Thus, the judge could then make a decision based on the information provided by this file and could decide whether to entrust the minor to his family, or to entrust him to a society of patronage, or to entrust him to another house of supervised education until his age of majority. This penitentiary technique invented in Fresnes constituted an important innovation in the French prison history. Since it was first intended for minor detainees, it was later extended to major detainees and Fresnes became a prison specialized in the evaluation of detainees. Indeed, the National Observation Center of Fresnes opened in 1951 and became national evaluation center in 2010. And it still works today.

**Keywords:** detainees, minors, house of supervised education, prisons of Fresnes, evaluation, observation, France, judge, justice, pupils

From 1929, minor boys were incarcerated in the house of supervised education (*maison d'éducation surveillée*) of the prisons of Fresnes, in France<sup>1</sup>. Then, following the creation in 1945 of the Department of Supervised Education at the Ministry of Justice (*Direction de l'Éducation surveillée*), it became in 1958 a special supervised education observation center (*centre spécial d'observation de l'éducation surveillée*) until 1979, when it finally closed.

The law of August 5th, 1850 on the education and the patronage of the young detainees organized the conditions of imprisonment of the minor detainees in France (YVOREL, 2005). Could be imprisoned minors of both sexes detained for crimes, offenses, contraventions of tax laws; or by paternal correction (*correction paternelle*); and minor acquitted under Article 66 of the Penal Code as having acted indiscriminately but not entrusted to their parents. Minors sentenced to imprisonment for more than six months and less than two years should serve their sentences in a penal colony (*colonie pénitentiaire*), as well as those acquitted under Article 66 of the Penal Code as having acted indiscriminately but not entrusted to their parents (until their age of majority, i.e. 21 years old). Those sentenced to more than two years of imprisonment or who have been declared insubordinate in a penal colony should be sent to a correctional colony (*colonie correctionnelle*), where the regime was harder. Girls detained by paternal correction, those under the age of sixteen who were condemned to imprisonment for any length of time, and those who were acquitted as having acted indiscriminately but not entrusted to their parents were imprisoned in "prison houses" (*maisons pénitentiaires*). Finally, because of the law of March 24, 1921, vagrant minors over the age of 18 were liable to imprisonment for 3 to 6 months and those aged 13 to 16 could be entrusted to their parents, an institution, an individual, a school of reform or a school of preservation, or a penal or correctional colony (GOLLIARD, 2014). However, by a decree of October 30, 1935, vagrant minors should be entrusted to individuals, charitable institutions or Public Assistance. But a circular of the Minister of Justice of March 27th, 1936, organized a transitional period during which, due to a lack of competent institutions with adequate reception conditions, vagrant minors continued to be entrusted to the Prison Administration.

Article 2 of the law of August 5, 1850, organized the establishment of a separate district in the prisons assigned to minor detainees of all categories. In Fresnes prisons, a correctional education cell block (*quartier cellulaire d'éducation correctionnelle*) for girls was set up in the special district of women in 1902, renamed school of preservation (*école de préservation*) in 1927 (YVOREL, 2007: 59). Then a house of supervised education for boys was set up in 1929 in a part of the third division of the great district of men (*grand quartier des hommes*). These two institutions were established by a decree on December 31, 1927, which transformed the penal colonies into houses of supervised education for boys and schools of preservation for girls. This decree also transformed correctional colonies into "correctional houses" (*maisons de correction*), settlers (*colons*) into "pupils" and supervisors into "monitors". But this reform, as noticed Yvorel (2009), is only a "reform on paper: the words changes but the content remains the same" and the regime of the houses of supervised education and the schools of preservation continued to be as hard as it was in penal and correctional colonies. Minors incarcerated in the house of supervised education of the prisons of Fresnes were in fact subject to a prison regime, because the majority of them were mainly defendant (*prévenus*), i.e. detainees waiting for their trial, or passengers (*passagers*), i.e. detainees waiting to be transferred to another house of monitored education. However, from 1930, boys were the object of an important innovation in the field of penitentiary evaluation and observation with the creation of the first "triage center" (*centre de triage*) (YVOREL, 2007: 63):

In the house of supervised education of Fresnes, where children stay for only a few weeks, there can be no question of correcting their morale or amending them in a complete way; it is only possible to do a triage. I was happy to see how conscientious it was done<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The prisons of Fresnes formed three parts: the great district of men; the special district of women; and the central infirmary of the prisons of the Seine.

<sup>2</sup> Seine, prisons of Fresnes, report to the Minister of Justice (March 26, 1935), National Archives F1a 4577.

The time that minors defendant spent in Fresnes was in fact entirely dedicated to the preparation of a file drawn up by the prison staff and then transmitted to the juvenile judge (*juge pour enfant*). The judge used this file to determine his judgment. This article presents the history of the house of supervised education of the prisons of Fresnes and the development of the first observation and evaluation penitentiary procedure for detainees created by the French Prison Administration, in 1930. This article is mainly based on the consultation of two sources of archives. The archives of the General Inspection of Administrative Services (GIAS, *Inspection générale des services administratifs*) that are kept in the French National Archives (on the site of Pierrefitte-sur-Seine) and classified under reference number F/1a/4510 to F/1a/4614. This inspection was placed under the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior (i.e. Home Office) and should inspect all institutions belonging to this Ministry, including prisons. Because the Prison Administration was placed under the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior until 1911, then it was placed under the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice. But as the inspection of the Ministry of Justice was created only in 1958, the GIAS continued to inspect prisons until that date. The inspectors wrote reports which were then transmitted to the Minister of Justice. Reports on prisons in the department of Seine (1917-1939) are classified under reference number F/1a/4577 and F/1a/4578 (1920-1939). The archives of the house of supervised education of the prisons of Fresnes are kept in the Departmental Archives of Val-de-Marne (*Archives départementales du Val-de-Marne*). The Departmental Archives of Val-de-Marne keep the penal files of the minor detainees which is classified under reference number 2Y5 670 (1936), 2Y5 694 (1937) and 511W 378 to 511W 400 (1947-1957).

## **1. THE DAILY FUNCTIONING OF THE HOUSE OF SUPERVISED EDUCATION AND THE SCHOOL OF PRESERVATION**

The house of supervised education, also known as the "minor boys quarter" (*quartier des garçons mineurs*) or "minor district" (*quartier des mineurs*), was set up in part of the third division of the great district of men of the prisons of Fresnes. But it remained totally separated from the detention of the adults. It was placed under the authority of the assistant director of the prison (*sous-directeur*) and the pupils were supervised by a staff consisting of a first master, a master and 22 monitors. They were incarcerated in 254 cells (or "rooms") spread over four floors.



Fig.1 Division of the great district of men. Gallica. 1913

But 14 cells were used for the general service of the prison, leaving only 240 cells usable. This number was very insufficient and caused situations of chronic overcrowding (as in 1937 where 307 pupils were incarcerated). The ground floor was reserved for syphilitics, "dangerous" pupils and those who were to be placed under special surveillance. On the first floor were the minors who were the subject of a provisional placement order for vagrancy (*ordonnance de placement provisoire pour vagabondage*). Defendant and "appellants" (i.e. those who appealed their court decision) occupied the second and third floors. On the fourth and last floor were imprisoned, with some defendant, the pupils who went to work every day in Paris in the buildings of the Ministry of Justice. The "passengers" (i.e. those who were waiting for their transfer to a provincial house of supervised education) were distributed among the different floors according to the possibilities of accommodation. In 1935, their distribution was as follows:

**Table1. Distribution of pupils according to their status**

Status	House of supervised education	School of preservation
Paternal correction	1	0
Passengers	33	0
Article 66	21	4
Appeal	12	5
Court of Cassation	7	0
Defendant	88	46
Total	162	55

Source: Seine, Prisons of Fresnes, report to the Minister of Justice (March 26, 1935), National Archives F1a 4577

When he arrived in Fresnes, the minor first encountered the prison clerk (*greffe*). He was then cleaning himself, putting on a uniform and he was locked in a cell. These cells were divided into seven sections organized as follows:

**Table2. Distribution of boys in sections according to their ages and convictions**

Sections	Ages of the pupils and reasons of their convictions
1st section	Pupils between the ages of 13 and 15 arrested for offenses against property or against persons
2nd section	Pupils between the ages of 13 and 15 arrested for vagrancy
3rd section	Pupils between the ages of 16 and 17 arrested for offenses against property or against persons
4th section	Pupils between the ages of 16 and 17 arrested for vagrancy
5th section	Pupils between the ages of 17 and 18 arrested for offenses against property or against persons
6th section	Pupils between the ages of 17 and 18 arrested for vagrancy
7th section	Pupils arrested for incident to probation

Source: Seine, Prisons of Fresnes, report to the Minister of Justice (December 12, 1936), National Archives F1a 4577

The school of preservation, also known as the "minor district", was located in the special district of women of the Fresnes prisons. It was placed under the authority of the assistant director of the prison and there were 156 places. The staff consisted of a first mistress, a mistress clerk and eleven instructors. In 1938, the distribution of the minors was as follows:

**Table3. Distribution of girls according to their status**

Status	1937	1938
Defendant	26	24
Appeal	1	1
Passengers	6	8
Vagabondes and prostitutes	25	27

Source: Seine, Prisons of Fresnes, report to the Minister of Justice (December 29, 1938), National Archives F1a 4577

The daily schedule of the pupils was (theoretically) the following:

**Table4. Schedule of the pupils**

Schedule	Boys	Girls
6:00	Awakening	Awakening
6:30	Breakfast	Cleaning the cells
7:30	Cleaning the cells	Breakfast

8:00/9:30	Sport and walk	Vagrant: sport and walk Condemned: work
9:30/10:30	Lunch	Lunch
10:30/11:45	Sport and walk	Vagrant: work Condemned: sport and walk
12:00/13:30	Rest. Reading in the cells	Rest. Reading in the cells
13:30/16:00	Collective games	Work
16:00/17:00	Dinner	Dinner
17:00/18:00	Summer: outdoor games Winter: in the cells (visit of the assistant director)	Summer: outdoor games Winter: conferences
18:00/19:30	Rest. Reading in the cells	Work
19:30	Bedtime	Bedtime

Source: Seine, Prisons of Fresnes, report to the Minister of Justice (December 29, 1938), National Archives F1a 4577

Thus, the boys’ schedule allowed them much more outdoor activities than girls because they had 6 hours a day in the summer and 5 hours a day in the winter to go for walks, play games or practice sports in the playgrounds. These physical activities, however, were about their only occupation of the day, outside of meals and a few hours passed in their cell dedicated to reading and writing their mail.

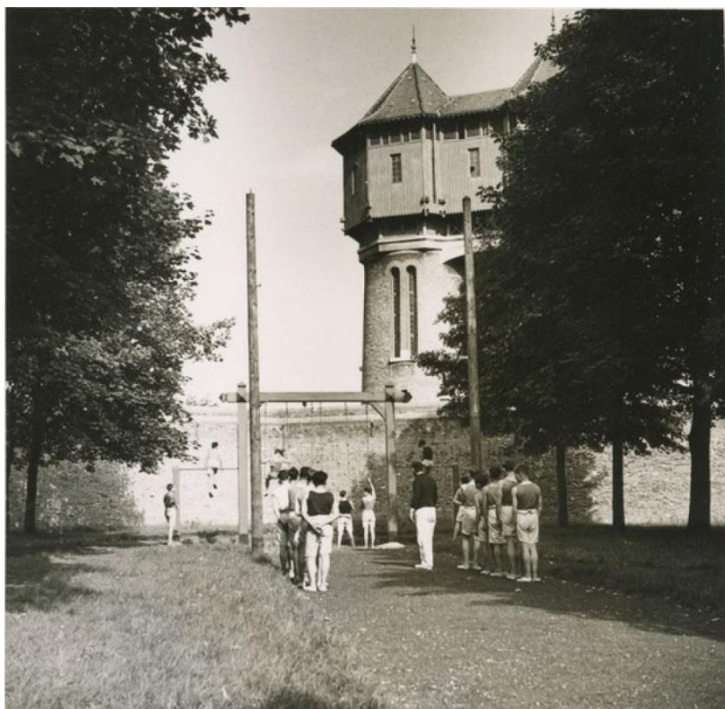


Fig 2. Outdoor activities of the boys. Geza Vandro, Musée national de l’Éducation. 1937

The girls had only two and a half hours of exercise in the summer and one and a half hour in the winter, the rest of their time was dedicated to work (which was limited to the manufacture of bouquets of artificial flowers). But this regulatory timetable was absolutely not respected because of a constant lack of staff. There were on average only seven monitors each day while the number of pupils was, for example, 273 in 1938! This

situation did not allow them to be able to enjoy their time outside and, in fact, the boys spent most of their day inactive in their cells (because they were subject to a high unemployment) and the girls spent most of their day working in their cells.



Fig. 3. Girl making artificial flowers in her cell. Geza Vador, Musée national de l'Éducation. 1937

The Fresnes prison regime was a cellular confinement system and the detainees were not allowed to speak. This prison was actually built according to the precepts of the law of June 5, 1875 on the departmental prisons which recommended separating individually day and night the defendant and to subject to an individual imprisonment the detainees condemned to an imprisonment of one year and one day and beyond. Thus, the minors, like the majors, were subjected to a cellular regime and were placed in common only twice a day: during the physical exercises and during the conferences. Three sports courts for the pupils were set up in three walking yards of the prison, as noticed Yvorel (2007) in referring to a report written in 1932 by a teacher of Fresnes, Robert Meurillon: "Children aged 13 to 18 cannot spend a whole day without doing anything physically, also three sports fields were created in three courts located behind the house of supervised education: a soccer field, a basketball field, an athletic field [...] (p. 64)."





Fig. 4. Outdoor activities of the girls. Geza Vándor, Musée national de l'Éducation. 1937

But even during conferences and sports sessions, conversations between minors were strictly forbidden. And the rest of the time, they were alone in their cell (except in case of overcrowding). This isolation was intended, according to the Inspector General of Administrative Services, to allow a better observation:

I will not insist on the general advantages of this isolation during the short period that pupils spend in Fresnes, but it is interesting to note from the point of view of the psychological study of children, that only in front of their teachers [...], without a reason to "show off", they will let themselves go to their true nature, they will be themselves and will more easily abandon themselves to confidences<sup>3</sup>.

Boys were subject to high unemployment. In 1936, barely thirty of them worked in the assembly and painting wooden toys and they earned according to their skills between 4 to 5 francs. Five others were employed as gardeners and five others were employed in the general service of the prison at the salary of 5 francs a day. The others could not work and therefore could not buy food supplements in the canteen (unless if their family could give them money).

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<sup>3</sup> Seine, Prisons of Fresnes, report to the Minister of Justice (December 29, 1938), National Archives F1a 4577.



Fig. 5. Boy working in a cell. Geza Vándor, Musée national de l'Éducation. 1937

The girls of the school of preservation were all employed in manufacture artificial flowers and also earned between 4 and 5 francs a day. Five were employed in the general service of the prison, where they earned 5 francs a day.

The pupils' diet was the same as that of adults with supplements of sausage, figs, pâté, cheese, chocolate or jam. It was composed in the morning of a black coffee, at 9 o'clock on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, a lean broth (*bouillon maigre*) and pâté, Tuesdays and Saturdays, a fatty broth (*bouillon gras*), with beef and figs. At the nine o'clock meal, a quarter of wine was distributed, and at four o'clock was distributed on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays, a stew of potatoes, Tuesdays, beans, Thursdays and Sundays, rice. To this ordinary diet were added all the supplements that the pupil had bought at the canteen and was distributed once a day, at noon. The food was good but the inspectors discovered many irregularities. For example, pupils were entitled from 1936 to a daily meat dish. But it was boiled beef that was first used to make a *pot-au-feu*:

The meat dish, to which the pupils are now entitled every day except Friday, invariably consists of boiled beef. There is meat only on feast days (Christmas, July 14). Adolescents in the midst of physical development, many of whom are anemic, need more nutritious meat than beef presented to them throughout the year, after serving as a *pot-au-feu*<sup>4</sup>.

The regulation also required the provision of fresh fish every Friday. But the inspector noted that the fresh fish was limited to two sardines in oil! Finally, a snack should have been served to the pupils at 4 pm. But it was impossible because of the meal schedules in Fresnes: lunch was served at 9 am and dinner at 4 pm. So this snack was added to the evening meal, in the form of a dessert. The only problem was that this dessert was often made of liverwurst! The girls' meals were often served cold because rations were transported by wagon in the open air from the kitchen to the school of preservation, which was about 200 meters away.

<sup>4</sup> Seine, prisons of Fresnes, report to the Minister of Justice (December 29, 1938), National Archives F1a 4577.



Fig. 6. Kitchen. Agence Meurisse, Gallica. 1913

The religious service was celebrated three times on Sundays: once for adult men, once for the pupils of the house of supervised education and once for the adult women and the pupils of the school of preservation. But the chapel was cellular. So the pupils took place in an individual box and could not communicate with their neighbors.

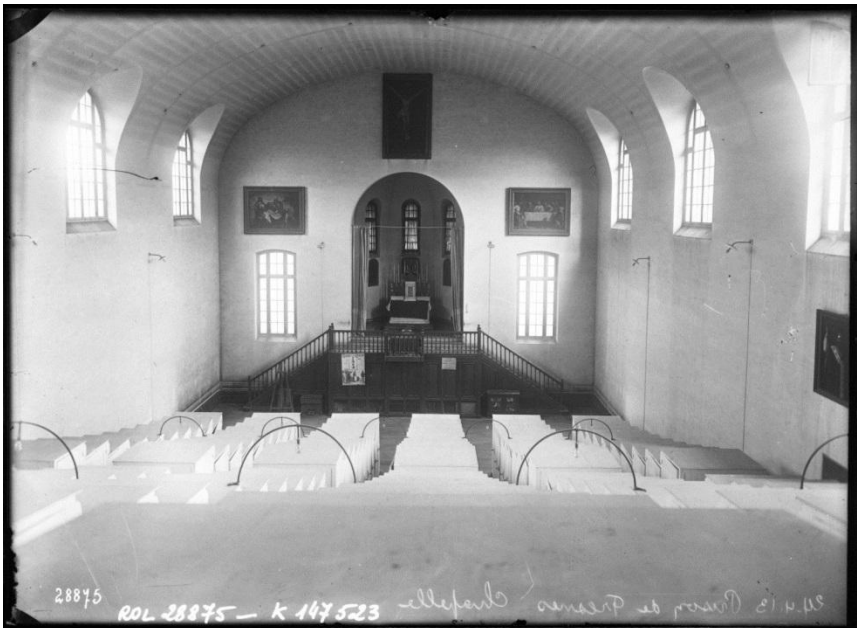


Fig. 7. School chapel. Agence Rol, Gallica. 1913

The girls received every day a conference given by the teacher. These lectures were accompanied by "light conferences" (*conférences lumineuses*) and music discs, and covered various topics such as: "the dangers of tobacco, the Mediterranean region, discipline, railways, Mont Saint-Michel, new China, the sugar industry, Scotland [...]." But these conferences were mostly limited, in fact, to listening music discs, playing ball games in the yard, reading children’s books or lessons in child care, as evidenced by their schedule:

Table5. Schedule of the girls

Schedule	Activities
Monday (17:00 to 18:00)	Housework education
Tuesday (17:00 to 18:00)	Reading

Wednesday (17:00 to 18:00)	Baby care
Thursday (17:00 to 18:00)	Music discs
Friday (17:00 to 18:00)	Chat ( <i>causerie</i> )
Saturday (17:00 to 18:00)	Baby care
Sunday (17:00 to 18:00)	Music discs

Source: Seine, Prisons of Fresnes, report to the Minister of Justice (December 29, 1938), National Archives F1a 4577

The teacher read in particular the *Holidays of Suzette* which did not correspond to the age of the audience: "This pink library literature, addressing girls who are mostly prostitutes is ridiculous! Same observation for Chalamet’s *Handbook of Home Education* made for ten-year-old girls<sup>5</sup>." Illiterates’ girls were entitled to a literacy class three times a week from 3 pm to 4 pm. For the boys, it was impossible to organize conferences on their premises, because of their disposition. But they received every day the visit of the assistant director of the prison who had an interview with each of them in order to: "make him speak, to probe his degree of perversion, to be personally aware of his possibilities of amendment<sup>6</sup>."

Minors could be subject to various punishments such as solitary confinement in the disciplinary ward, deprivations of food, physical exercises and conference, loss of employment and fines. Cell punishments were performed in the adults’ disciplinary ward. For boys, 552 punishments were pronounced in 1937 for:

**Table6. Reasons for boys’ punishment**

Reasons of punishments	Number of punishments
Offenses against the rule of silence	144
Open windows	127
Destruction of window panes	72
Degradations	41
Quarrels, insults	28
Traffic	19
Insolence	19
Rebellion, mutiny	9
Attempts to escape	5
Threats to staff	4
Assaults against other pupils	4
Acts of immorality	3
Tobacco use	3
Refusal of obedience	2
Refusal to work	2
Various offenses	2
Total	552

Source: Seine, Prisons of Fresnes, report to the Minister of Justice (December 29, 1938), National Archives F1a 4577

<sup>5</sup> Seine, prisons of Fresnes, report to the Minister of Justice (December 29, 1938), National Archives F1a 4577.  
<sup>6</sup> Seine, prisons of Fresnes, report to the Minister of Justice (December 29, 1938), National Archives F1a 4577.

Of these 552 punishments, 385 consisted of days of isolation in the disciplinary ward:

- 13 punishments of 8 days of isolation;
- 27 punishments of 6 days of isolation;
- 126 punishments of 4 days of isolation;
- 10 punishments of 3 days of isolation;
- 201 punishments of 1 day of isolation.

For girls, 102 punishments were pronounced in 1937 for:

**Table7. Reasons for girls’ punishment**

Reasons of punishments	Number of punishments
Offenses against the rule of silence	37
Acts of immorality	14
Open windows	18
Insults	13
Refusal of obedience	8
Destructions of dishes	7
Assaults against other pupils	2
Simulations of suicide attempts	2
Refusal to work	1
Total	102

Source: Seine, Prisons of Fresnes, report to the Minister of Justice (December 29, 1938), National Archives F1a 4577

Of these 102 punishments, 55 consisted of days of isolation in the disciplinary ward:

- 1 punishment of 8 days of isolation;
- 1 punishment of 6 days of isolation;
- 26 punishments of 4 days of isolation;
- 3 punishments of 3 days of isolation;
- 24 punishments of 2 days of isolation.

**2. THE PROCEDURE FOR OBSERVING AND ASSESSING MINORS**

As soon as he arrived in Fresnes, the minor defendant was assessed according to three modes: psychological, social and medical. The time spent by the minor in pre-trial detention was essentially used to create his file, which was then transmitted to the judge. This evaluation was carried out by prison staff (teacher and doctor); by a social service; and by psychiatrists.

"The teacher is responsible for provoking confidences<sup>7</sup>." From the first day of his arrival at Fresnes, the pupil was questioned by the teacher, and this first information was written in a special register.

<sup>7</sup> Seine, prisons of Fresnes, report to the Minister of Justice (December 12, 1936), National Archives F1a 4577.



5-12-35  
 Raymond -  
 n° 1418  
 à Cliduy (S.) -  
 C.E.P.  
 Cordanier  
 Mère Sœur -  
 Sœur mariée: 18<sup>ans</sup> Impasse  
 Lamentier à S. Ouen (Paris) -  
 père = mécanicien  
 un frère -  
 Autocritique:  
 Paris: mai 1939 = vol = confié  
 au patronage de l'Enfance et  
 de l'Adolescence -  
 vol d'une bicyclette avec son  
 camarade Gentour - Tentative  
 de suicide avant son entrée  
 au patronage:  
 (voir calvier) -  
 Vient à la M.G.S. de  
 Fresnes pour insister à la

Fig. 8. Arrival interview of the pupil Raymond C. Departmental Archives of Val-de-Marne, 2Y5 694. 1935

The teacher continued his visits to the pupil every day and completed this register by specifying indications collected on his health, his conduct, his visits, etc. Ultimately, it would become a complete summary of his observation. After this first interrogation, the teacher gave the minor a notebook asking him "to tell the story of his life, to search into his childhood memories, to confess his mistakes, and to expose his hopes for the future<sup>8</sup>." The pupil had 24 hours to write his story. Then, when he finished, the teacher pointed out the passages he considered interesting (in blue on the document), and he then noted his personal appreciation of the attitude and character of the pupil.

<sup>8</sup> Seine, prisons of Fresnes, report to the Minister of Justice (December 12, 1936), National Archives F1a 4577.

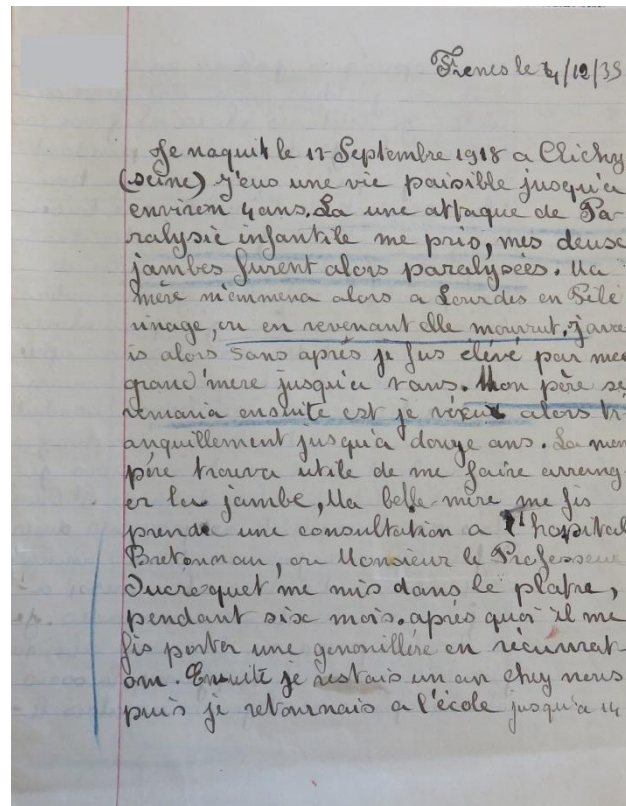


Fig. 9. Raymond C. pupil's notebook. Departmental Archives of Val-de-Marne, 2Y5 694. 1935

The teacher continued to note every day the observations he made on the pupil from the physical and mental points of view, after his daily visit. Also included on this file were "[...] various information provided by the masters and instructors, written or received letters, reading preferences (library books or subscriptions, with the permission of the director, to certain sports or amusing journals), work attendance or laziness, attention to conferences, trends recognized during physical exercises and games<sup>9</sup>."

The day after his arrival, the minor was examined by a doctor who questioned him about his parents' health, his medical history, and so on, and he was subject to a special diet if necessary. Every Wednesday, pupils who arrived the previous week were subjected to an anti-venereal medical consultation. A blood test was done to detect tuberculosis and syphilitics. Then a new blood test was done four weeks later. Finally, a medical notebook was given to the minor where the result of his serology was indicated. This notebook was drawn up under the circular of January 28th, 1931, which stipulated that: "For any minor suffering from syphilis, gonorrhea or tuberculosis, a medical notebook shall be drawn up before the minor is sent to a corrective institution." Any minor with syphilis received a "control and treatment card" on the same model as the one used in the clinics. This card was intended to allow the minor to be able to continue his treatment upon his release, without it being possible to be able to determine the place where he started it.

<sup>9</sup> Seine, prisons of Fresnes, report to the Minister of Justice (December 12, 1936), National Archives F1a 4577.

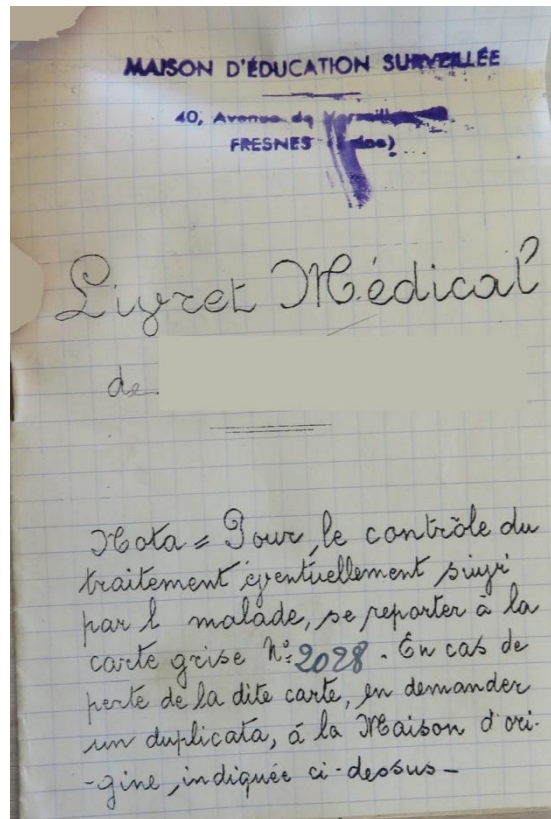


Fig. 10. Medical notebook of pupil Auguste M. Departmental Archives of Val-de-Marne, 2Y5 670. 1934

The pupils imprisoned in Fresnes by order of a judge (*placés sous mandat de dépôt*) were the subject of a social investigation carried out by the delegates of three associations: the Moral Support to Youth on Trial (*Aide morale à la jeunesse traduite en justice*); the Safeguarding of the Adolescence (*Sauvegarde de l'adolescence*); and the Social Godmothers (*Marraines sociales*). This investigation concerned "the family, heredity, material situation, health, morality, education and character of the child" and the delegate completed his investigation by making a proposal of orientation of the minor. These investigations were ordered by the judge and about fifteen francs was allocated to the associations to cover their expenses. The investigation was transmitted to the Fresnes staff about one month after the minor entered the prison.



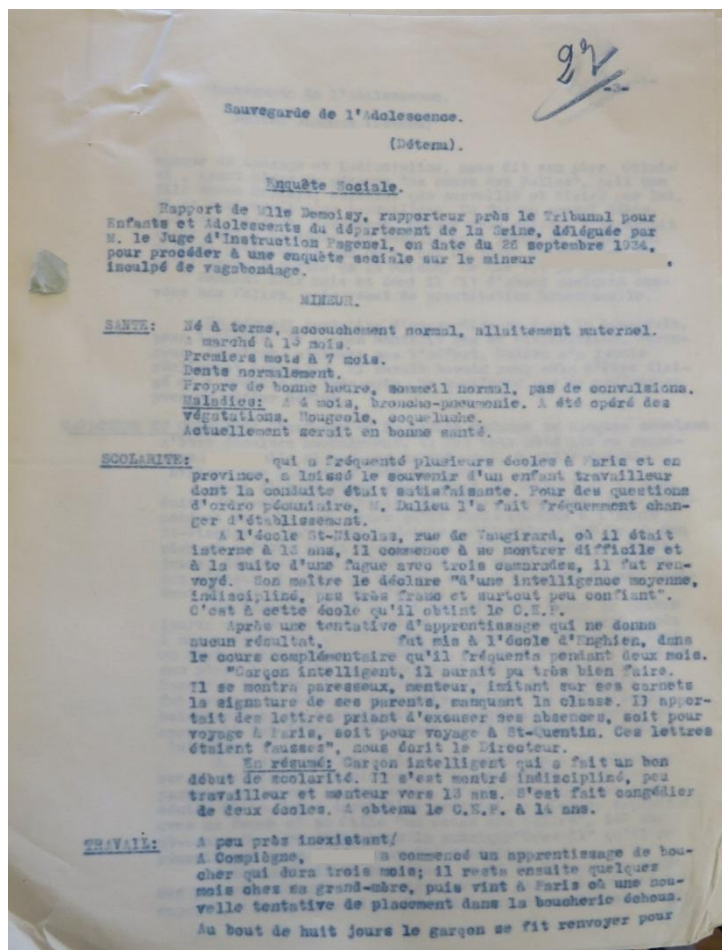


Fig. 11. Social investigation of the pupil Jacques D. Archives of Val-de-Marne, 2Y5 670. 1934

The pupils were then subjected to a medico-psychological examination carried out daily by a team of psychiatrists. But before this examination, the team received the notebook written by the pupil, the special register written by the teacher, the medical notebook and the social investigation. The result of the psychiatric examination was recorded on a sheet with the mentions: general information, biological status, psycho-moral status and proposal of orientation of the minor. In addition to this psychiatric service, a psychiatrist was permanently assigned from 1936 to Fresnes. He went there every Monday and as often as his service required. He examined the pupils from two points of view: from the strictly medical point of view, that is to say he observed and detected the "abnormal"; and from the "penitentiary" point of view, that is to say he selected and directed the pupils to various establishments. The "abnormal" defendant pupil were reported to him by the prison staff and by the expert doctors who could wish to have the result of an observation before writing their expertise or by one of the psychiatrists responsible for the medical-psychological examination and who thought it was necessary to carry out a more in-depth study.

N° du dossier :

## EXAMEN MÉDICO-PSYCHOLOGIQUE

Nom : \_\_\_\_\_  
 Prénoms : Georges  
 Age : 14 ans 1/2 Né le \_\_\_\_\_ à \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dedit : Yvels (Sage d'Instruction N. CHAUMONT, Ordonnance du 3/9/35)

Renseignements généraux (antécédents, hérédité, etc.) :

Père mort en 1930, était tuberculeux et alcoolique.-  
 La mère est bien portante; a eu 9 enfants, tous vivants, pas de défiance-  
 couche. Le dernier enfant est né après le mariage.-  
 La mère est d'une moralité très faible, a déjà subi 2 condamnations  
 dont une de prison.-

Etat biologique :

Tous bons constitution.-  
 Puberté très précoce (14 A<sub>2</sub> de qui correspond à un individu normal  
 de 16 ans).-  
 Amé sur la face coïncident avec la poussée de la barbe.-  
 Développement satisf.-  
 Acrotychisme. - Hypertrichose sur les membres, due, comme la puberté  
 précoce, à un hyperfonctionnement glandulaire.-

Etat psycho moral :

Intelligence nettement faible.-  
 Pas de C.I.P., degré d'instruction correspondant à celui d'un enfant de  
 6 ans à peine.-  
 Caractères : égo, violent, capoté, paresseux; mais, par contre, extrêmement  
 malicieux comme chez beaucoup de débiles.-  
 Tous les essais d'apprentissage ont été déplorables: insuffisance de  
 moyens, mauvaise volonté, rendement médiocre.-  
 Le vol du minceur est dû à l'action d'un caractère, et au défaut de surveillance  
 et d'éducation du milieu familial, et à la débilité mentale (vol de  
 débile typique).-

Propositions :

On peut tenter de lui donner un niveau scolaire correspondant à  
 ses possibilités à Fresnes-le-Château, par exemple.-  
 Ce minceur doit être dirigé vers des métiers simples : manœuvre, manœuvre  
 spécialisé, mais ne jamais viser l'artisanat.-

Date : 30 Octobre 1935.  
 Signature : Signé: Dr. PAUL-BONINCH

Fig 12. Medico-psychological examination of the pupil Georges L. Archives of Val-de-Marne, 2Y5 694. 1934

Copies of the social investigation and the result of the psychiatric examination were sent to the judge and the president of the juvenile court. Finally, when the date of the minor's trial was fixed, the director of the prisons of Fresnes transmitted to the president of the court a notice indicating the degree of amendment of the pupil and his rehabilitation capabilities.

*Maison d'Education Surveillée de Fresnes*

*NOTICE INDIVIDUELLE concernant le Jeune*

Gabriel Né le \_\_\_\_\_

Date de l'arrivée à Fresnes 21 Avril 1936

Date du départ de Fresnes 9 Mai 1936

*-Appréciation motivée et punitions encourues-*

Punitions encourues : Néant.

Attitude et tenue correctes.

A surveiller au point de vue mœurs.

Travail satisfaisant.

Fresnes le 9 Mai 1936  
 Le Directeur,  
*[Signature]*

The judge could decide to entrust the minor to his family. In this case, one of his parents should to pick him up in Fresnes. The purpose was to allow the director to talk to the parent and provide advice to him following the observations made on the pupil during his stay in the prison. The judge could also decide to entrust the pupil to a society of patronage. Every Thursday, the pupils entrusted to a Parisian patronage society were taken to the Paris court where a delegate came to pick them up. If the minor was entrusted to a provincial patronage society, the delegate should come to Fresnes to pick him up. The patronage societies received a copy of the social investigation and a copy of the medico-psychological examination of the minor. The judge could finally decide to entrust him until his majority to a house of supervised education or a school of preservation. While awaiting his transfer, the pupil's file was then constituted and the Prison Administration was looking for the establishment which could suit him the best because of his age, his health and his dispositions. Thus, upon the arrival of a minor in another house of supervised education, the director could read his file and know his background and the impression he produced on the staff who evaluated him at Fresnes.



Fig. 14. Pupils breaking rocks at the house of supervised education of Saint-Hilaire. Henri Manuel, National School of Prison Administration. 1930

While the prison of Fresnes has no longer minor detainees today, the experiment that was conducted there from 1930 was the beginning of a specialization of this prison in the observation and evaluation of detainees. This penitentiary technique based on a "knowledge-power" (*savoir-pouvoir*) (FOUCAULT, 1975: 32) was first created in Fresnes and then spread to all the other houses of supervised education in France. It was then extended to the major prisoners with the opening in Fresnes of a "triage center" which became a year later National Orientation Center (NOC) (DERASSE and VIMONT, 2014). The creation of the NOC was intended to allow the evaluation and the orientation of adult detainees sentenced to long prison terms. Every six weeks, the center received groups of 60 to 90 detainees (CONSEIL SUPERIEUR DE L'ADMINISTRATION PENITENTIAIRE, 1952: 132). They were held in cells where they had to work and they were observed by several specialists of the prison of Fresnes. They were first subjected to a medical examination completed by radiographic and serological examinations. Then they were subjected to a psychiatric examination and the report included several items: hereditary history, medical history, education, professional activities, marriage and offspring and level of intelligence. The psychiatrist should then make proposals on the most appropriate prison regime to apply to the detainee and on his chances of social reintegration. The detainee was finally subjected to a psychotechnical examination to find out what type of work could be suitable for him. At the end of the session, a commission composed of the director of the NOC, doctors and psychotechnicians examined the detainee's file and chose the best prison where he could serve his sentence. From 1985, the NOC became a National Observation Center and continued to assess detainees before their incarceration but also during the execution of their prison sentence. Finally, following the law of 25 February 2008 on the detention of security

and the declaration of criminal irresponsibility due to mental disorder, the NOC has become in 2010 a National Assessment Center and, in addition to its former missions, it must now also assess the "dangerousness" of the detainees. This mission was recently extended with the opening in 2018 in Fresnes of a ward of evaluation of radicalism (*quartier d'évaluation de la radicalisation*).

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