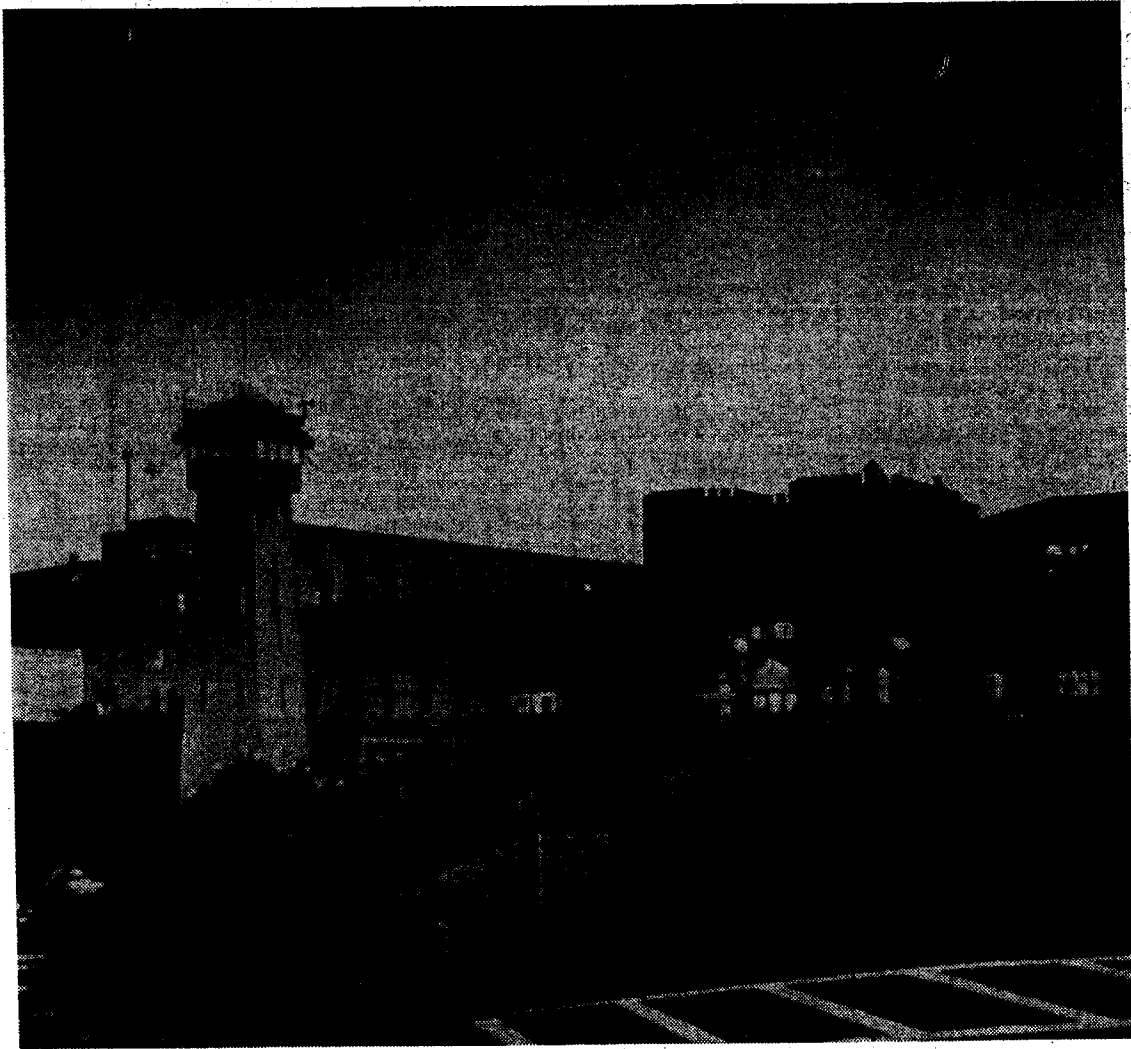


The New Pressures Confuse,

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Embitter San Quentin Guards



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By Jim Stingley
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SAN QUENTIN, Calif.— Life was never meant to be easy behind the yellow brick walls. When a correctional officer hired on, he learned that fast.

He learned that in a world of locked-up souls a different set of values applied. That life was often a commodity less precious than a carton of cigarettes.

He learned that in a world pressures were the order of the day inside these walls, that he would always be watched by hundreds of hidden eyes, many looking for weaknesses in him, many waiting for his one mistake that would give them the jump on him.

Above all, he learned that in today's scheme of things the inmate who "breaks bad" does so knowing full well he has, because of contemporary laws, an advantage over the officer. All this came out in interviews with several guards—and ex-guards.

"We can use only necessary force. The prisoner knows this. All he has to do is stop and the officer has to stop. We don't have this advantage. If we stop, we're dead."

"You've got a whistle—and about 20 minutes for help to get to you if they're fast. We had four inmates saw out one night and it took 25 minutes to round up enough men to take over the unit again.

"You're not permitted a gun at night, mainly because one time the cons outsmarted the guards and got their guns away from them."

And this was the way life pretty much was for the correctional officer at San Quentin . . . up until Aug. 21, 1971.

On that day three officers were murdered and three others brutally slashed in what was the beginning of the darkest time in San Quentin's history.

In the week that followed, large groups of people some-

San Quentin Prison: "We have been getting a new inmate here in the past two years,

times reaching 500 in number, pushed up against the prison's main gate, chanting, "three pigs aren't enough! Three pigs aren't enough!"

In that same week, the one thing they never figured would be violated was. Forces from the outside, something else they never had to contend with before,

pressed at their home life, made threatening calls to their wives, left notes on their car windshields saying, "You're next, pig."

The pressure was on like they had never thought possible. And it stayed and today it remains. And it has confused these men. And scared them. And made them

angry. And very bitter.

It's worse on my wife than on me. If I'm 10 minutes late from work now, she'll be crying when I come through the door."

The pressure worked stronger. One officer came home to find his wife standing in the bedroom beside her luggage—all packed. "If

the revolutionary."

you go to work tomorrow, I won't be here when you come back," she told him.

The next day he resigned. For those who stuck it out?

They are packing guns in their cars, something they never did before. They are getting unlisted phones.

What has happened?

"Until Aug. 21 we had been operating on the rather vague kind of premise that simple human values will bring about whatever change is possible in a prison in terms of rehabilitation. We had been as lenient as we could, allowing as much public contact with inmates as possible. There had been a continuing relaxation of security measures on the assumption that the environment affects behavior most favorable and adversely . . . so we tried to create a favorable environment.

"With the old kind of inmate, this worked real well. You could get away with a lot of this type stuff and not get burned too badly.

"But we have been getting a new inmate here in the past two years, the revolutionary. Like Jackson . . . They don't care how good you are to them. You're still the bad guy and they are going to get you when they get the chance.

"This is a new breed of inmate. And we don't know how to handle him. They are just hard core. They are willing to wait months if necessary for their, chance

—and then they'll take you.

"The reason Jackson wasn't handcuffed that day was because he never gave us any trouble. He always did exactly what he was told, never really gave anybody any lip except in a very mild way.

"So he wasn't handcuffed. And three of my friends are dead."

The guards do not understand why what happened happened. They see no solution.

"There's no real way to correct it. I think the thinking of the people outside needs correcting. I mean, there doesn't seem to be any real reason for having a prison any more. They charge you taxes to provide protection on the streets, you pay taxes to hire policemen to catch criminals, you pay taxes to prosecute the criminal, taxes to support him while he's in prison and

you pay taxes to try and get him out of prison. I can't figure it."

What will be the attitude of the guards toward the inmates now?

"Until last Aug. 21 . . . we had seen ourselves as having backed off and backed off—of making more and more concessions to the humanness of the inmate.

"But that was plain butcher-

ery. There was nothing human about that act they committed. I decided then I've had it.

"While I personally hate to see us going back to lock-step lines on the yard, keeping people locked up all but four hours a day with no rehabilitation programs, no educational or vocational training, I don't know any other way to control this revolutionary element."