

Reagan Orders Prisons Inquiry, Blames Dissidents for Violence

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SACRAMENTO, Calif., Sept. 9—Gov. Ronald Reagan has ordered a state agency to investigate violence and killings in state prisons to counter what he calls “well-publicized attempts to distort the facts of the recent San Quentin escape attempt.”

In an executive order to the chairman of the State Board of Corrections, James Hall, the Governor said of the recent violence at several California prisons:

“Many of these incidents appear to result from the unlawful designs of self-proclaimed, revolutionary forces operating within and without prison walls.”

The Governor’s goals for the board investigation differ sharply from proposals in the Legislature for studies of the conditions leading to the violence. Black lawmakers are urging an inquiry into allegations of prison brutality and also of the circumstances under which three San Quentin inmates, including George Jackson, and three guards were killed Aug. 21.

Assemblyman John Miller, a Berkeley Democrat who heads the State Assembly’s Black Caucus, argues that the version offered by the prison authorities is not believed by many blacks. The authorities say that the

killings resulted when Jackson, one of three prisoners known as the Soledad Brothers, attempted to escape after a guard detected a gun hidden in Jackson’s hair.

The Assembly already has asked the Joint Legislature Budget Committee to conduct a study to determine if the 119-year-old San Quentin Prison should be abolished, replaced or kept in operation.

Mr. Reagan, in his executive order, blamed changes in the composition of the prison populations for part of the trouble at the facilities.

His executive order said:

“Many of these incidents also result from the fact that our correctional institutions contain a greater percentage of violent offenders than ever before. These forces constitute a real and present threat to an orderly correctional system, as they do to society at large.”

The Governor said the public was entitled to the truth about the San Quentin violence and added, “Our correctional officers and their families are entitled to personal safety.”

He asked the board to conduct a thorough study of security precautions at the prisons and “any other procedures which will halt the violence and the attempts by radical elements and violent offenders to disrupt the orderly processes of our correctional system.”