

Excerpt from intv of Paul Cook by Sandy Silver, KFFA, 15 Sep 71.

Cook is a former inmate of San Quentin, who was released 15 months prior to the time of this intv; runs Alternative House for ex-convicts in Oakland.

Miss Silver: When the incident happened [21 Aug 71] and the men were forced to lie in the yard, one man - I think his name was Allan Mancino - was shot in the leg while they were lying chained hand and [foot], and I understand that he has been removed to Nevada - I think it was Nevada, wasn't it? - and it seems that the guards are trying to say, or the prison establishment, are trying to say that he has been removed for his own personal safety. But apparently, from what I've heard prisoners say, the man was all right, and he was in more danger from the guards than he was from any of the prisoners, certainly, and he was considered one of the men. He was not thought of as a pig, or what have you.

Cook: Yes, that's true. Mancino was one who had actually proved himself on the yard, in terms of being able to hold his own. You see, there are men inside of that prison that are respected by all the groups because they carry themselves like men, and they carry themselves with a kind of code of ethics, you know, that's very honorable.

We feel, really, that Al Mancino is being taken out to be given one of these Department of Correction's special deals again. You know we've had many men - aside from the issue that took place on the 21st - who've lost different parts of their bodies ... [for instance] a guy puts his hand in a saw with no safety equipment and saws his hand off. Now before he could get out of prison he had to come [before] the Adult Authority and he had to say that he would not file a suit against the state before he would get consideration for a date. These kinds of things happen. Sometimes a guy is given a date with that particular understanding, that he will not sue the state for these kinds of things.

But we think at this point that Allen Mancino is definitely in grave danger for his life, and the guards could tell us anything, like one of their favorites at this point is "he tried to escape." It doesn't make any difference, whether the guy is chained or there's two thousand feet of concrete - they just have a tendency to think they can get off with the escape bit.

Cook shot and killed 14 Oct 72; see SFChronicle 3 Jul 73.

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Cook: When [Associate Warden James] Park kept alluding to the fact that two white inmates [Frank Lynn, Ronald Kane] were killed ... what he was trying to do was to incite the white inmates inside of San Quentin - you know, some of the Nazi-oriented ... groups, also some of the Hell's Angels, and some of the other groups too - to form a retaliatory group and start another race riot. And then in the race riot you would lose the real issues of George [Jackson]'s death. The same thing when he made the statement that he would not feel too anxious or too bitter if one of the guards shot some of the inmates. ... I'm saying that all of this condoned violence from the institution - personified [by] Warden Park, [by] Jacobs, [by] Lt. Zimmerman, [by] many of the other kinds of racists inside that prison, and the arch-racist, Warden Nelson, through his policy of condoning all the things that happened - we find ourselves back in a kind of cave-man existence in that prison situation. And it's going to get worse before it gets better.

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There's a thing called a 72-hour pass ...at San Quentin prison. These are [for] men who are released to come to the street to look for a job ... once they have a parole date. During the last three weeks prior to August the 21st I had been meeting several of these inmates who were abnormally fearful about the kind of retaliation that was taking place due to Officer Davis's death [white guard Leo G. Davis, fatally stabbed 21 Jul 71 while guarding black inmate Herman Johnson in prison hospital] and the alarming kind of storm trooper situation that the guards were going through, especially Lt. Zimmerman's clique, and also the other guards in this kind of permissiveness [on the part of] the institution administration.

As a result of that a strike was supposed to occur on the 16th, and one of the top demands of that strike was for the guards to quit harassing them because of the guard that was killed in the hospital. So what we're really saying is that the pace had stepped up on the inside and the guards who were actually armed with the new forming and signing of the contract with the Teamsters' Union - in terms of having some more backing - created an atmosphere where something of this magnitude could have taken place. We don't know whether it was George Jackson that was aimed at or whether it was Ruchell Magee or one of the Soledad Brothers, but we would know that it was someone that was very close to us, you know, that would be sacrificed for Officer Davis.

And that was the kind of thing that had been coming to us and that we had been trying to get out to underground presses and the whole bit, in terms of showing some of the anxiety [on the part] of the inmates.

Now what happened was that the strike was geared to go for as long as it had to; in other words, they had started getting to the canteen, they had started stocking up so that they couldn't be starved out of the cells [?], they had started trading with other inmates, they were carrying each other. But something ironic happened: the strike only lasted for one day because the administration had become victorious again by using the same racism game. It put out the word to a few of its prize people, and the word got back that the strike was a revolutionary strike and that it was using whites and Chicanos as [unintelligible] to get off some black revolutionary aims and objectives, and it was not to the best interest of the rest of the population.

Consequently the North Block and the West Block, which are the guys that get extra showers and so on ... went back to work and this only left the South Block and the East Block out. What we're getting at really is that the breaking of the strike and the whole bit - that we feel that this is one of the reasons why Kane and Lynn were killed at that time: they had been involved in multiple racial incidents on the yard prior to them getting up there, and since they had mobility as tier-tenders in order to transport stuff - we feel that much of that came as a result of that kind of situation.