

Reporter's Story

INSIDE SAN

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First Tour Since Killings

QUENTIN

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Inmates Talk to Reporter

By Jim Brewer

Inmates inside San Quentin's Adjustment Center complained bitterly yesterday of verbal harassment from guards, but there was no apparent evidence of severe beatings since Saturday's violence.

Soledad Brothers John Cluchette and Fleeta Drumgo were among 22 participants in the alleged escape attempt who were visited yesterday by this reporter during a 30-minute inspection that raised some questions and answered others.

Prison officials, besieged by charges from blacks that the lives of all inmates inside the adjustment center are in jeopardy, opened the doors of the prison's maximum security facility to three newsmen.

ATTEMPTS

It was the first time since six men died in the bloody escape attempt that outsiders had been allowed to visit the scene and talk with the inmates involved.

But as we walked slowly from cell to cell, it became clear that many of the mostly black occupants had nothing to say to three white strangers.

"The Imperial Wizard sent them to kill us," shouted one inmate with apparent reference to Raymond K. Procunier, director of the State Department of Corrections.

"They're state agents here to murder us," said another from his bed. "Don't say nothing."

Ruchell Magee, the man

accused of killing Judge Harold Haley in the Marin courthouse shootout last August, was the first to respond.

He was described by San Francisco attorney Phillip Ryan Thursday as dehydrated, severely beaten with a five-inch lump on his head and with a cut on his lip. Ryan also described Magee as having "lost his spirit."

But he suddenly regained it

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at the sight of this reporter, whom he bitterly chewed out for his coverage of his case in Marin county.

Although his body was covered by a T-shirt, Magee displayed no signs of injuries to his face or head, other than a close and crudely-cropped haircut.

In the adjacent wing of 17 one-man cells, Drumgo broke the ice for what was to become a series of short inmate interviews.

He pointed to fresh cuts on the base of his neck. His skull appeared to be free from bumps and bruises, but his right ankle showed chain abrasions.

He limped to the front of his cell and spoke in a low voice.

"It's the death threats. That's the most. They tell me I'm a dead man. I don't know how long I've got to live. You tell 'em that."

CELL

Cluchette, in a nearby cell, had little to say. But he quietly displayed a blister-like knot the size of a golf ball on his right ankle, and he opened his shirt to reveal several long scratches on his chest and back.

Both Cluchette and Drumgo complained that they had been beaten by guards when they were returned to San Quentin following court appearances in San Francisco this week.

Prison officials later de-

med those charges.

"Those injuries undoubtedly occurred here," said Associate Warden John Apostol. "I don't think anybody knows where they got them specifically, but there certainly was a time (Saturday) when there was plenty of physical contact."

GUARDS

Inmate Charles Gardner claimed the adjustment center guards had "treated us bad, bad."

"They made us come back down here yesterday (from the second floor where they had been kept since Saturday) and we had to clean up all the blood and s---."

"They're trying to project an optimum atmosphere here for you," inmate Kenneth Divans whispered out of range of nearby prison officials. "We feel our lives are impaired. It's imperative that we be taken out of here by a federal court order."

"We're innocent of anything, man," Divans said. "And they're keeping us incommunicado."

Both Gardner and Divans, like almost all of the inmates seen for brief moments yesterday, displayed no evidence of being victims of physical brutality.

ARM

Inmate Bernard Gordon had his right arm in a sling and claimed he had been struck with a nightstick. He refused to show, however, the extent of the injury, which he claimed amounted to a compound fracture.

Three Marin county doctors, members of the Marin County Medical Association, visited the inmates Thursday night, and reported yesterday that "all prisoners appeared in good physical shape."

Two of the alleged participants in Saturday's violence were recuperating in the prison hospital yesterday,

and were not seen during the press inspection.

Allan Mancino, who "had his leg blown off" on the lawn outside the adjustment center following the escape attempt, according to lawyers representing Quentin convicts, was said to be in good physical condition — with only slight wounds caused by cement fragments from a ricocheting bullet.

HOSPITAL

The report by the examining doctors confirmed the prison version of Mancino's injury. Inmate Earl Gibson, who was in the prison hospital yesterday, for observation, had a bump on his head, according to the doctors' report.

Attorneys who saw their clients on Thursday returned with reports that Lieutenant Richard A. Nelson, the correctional officer in charge of the adjustment center, was responsible for a reign of terror inside the facility since Saturday night.

He was quoted by one attorney Thursday as threatening the inmates that "none of them would ever get out alive."

"If I wanted to do something like that," Nelson said yesterday, "I could have done it on Saturday and gotten away with it."

INMATES

He also denied reports that guards are forcing inmates to crawl into their cells on all fours, and said that the officers keep no weapons in the adjustment center and that only three nightsticks are on the premises — and they are kept under lock and key.

Most of the inmates held in the maximum security adjustment center, have committed, or are charged with committing crimes inside the prison. Many of the inmates accused of taking part in Saturday's violence have been

in the center for more than five years.

The center, a long, three-story structure, is comprised of two adjacent wings separated by a maintenance corridor. The prison's death row inmates are housed on part of the second level and all of the third.

On the first level, where the breakout attempt is said to have originated, are 17 cells, each measuring ten by 12 feet. Each cell contains a bunk and a toilet, but no basin.

Since Saturday, the prisoners in the adjustment center have been kept in their cells 23 hours a day. They are taken out only for a brief exercise period.

LUNCHES

They are being fed two bag lunches each day. Each consists of two sandwiches, the prisoners said.

During yesterday's inspection, the cell corridors — blacked at each end by two sets of heavy iron bars, — gave off repugnant odors of perspiration and urine.

The yard outside the center resembles the quad on any college campus, with freshly mowed lawns, a flower garden and patches of shrubbery.

With the exception of one claim of innocence, the inmates interviewed yesterday did not discuss the events of Saturday, nor did they voluntarily refer to it.

The reporters were allowed to enter the center after repeated requests by attorneys and prisoners to verify charges of brutality. The understanding was that lengthy interviews would not be conducted and that no questions would be asked that had a direct bearing on the current state and Marin county investigations into the incident.

(In addition to The Chronicle's Jim Brewer, the other two reporters touring the prison were Stephen Cook of the Examiner and Jeff Greer of the San Rafael Independent - Journal.)