

HW:

You asked about pre-Jackson killings etc at San Quentin. From various files here, the following may be helpful.

The SF Chronicle, in a story Aug 23 on "The Bloody History of San Quentin," says that a total of nine correctional officers in the state's system of 12 prisons have been killed this year, but provides no breakdown. It also says that in the last two years, inmate killings -- presumably in the 12 prisons -- have increased dramatically -- 11 dead in 1970, 15 the year before. Again, no breakdown. It relates this increase to the "rise in political zeal."

At SQ, According to this account, political awareness began about a ~~year~~ decade ago with the Black Muslims. In Oct. 1961 one inmate was killed in San Quentin and four were wounded in disturbances related to the breaking up of a Muslim meeting.

"In 1962 many inmates who were thought politically dangerous were placed in the adjustment center. A year later, a well-known Muslim leader, Booker T. (X) Johnson was shot in the center's exercise yard by a tower guard who said he fired to stop a black-white showdown."

In 1967 there was a prison strike called by the Muslims where 1200 black inmates refused to leave their cells "but prison officials said the mass refusal was based on a fear of reprisals by the Muslims."

The story then makes the point that by 1970 "the name Muslim had almost disappeared from the black political alliances" and that other individuals and other prisons were making more impact on the restless, including Huey Newton, Eldridge Cleaver, Soledad, and, of course, the Aug. 7, 1970 shootout at the San Rafael courthouse in which George Jackson's younger brother, Jonathan, 17, smuggled four guns into a courtroom, armed three cons who were appearing there, and kidnaped the presiding judge and several others. In the resulting shootout Jonathan Jackson, two of the convicts, McClain and Christmas, were killed along with Judge Harold Haley. Ruchell Magee, one of the cons, was gravely wounded but lived to recover. He and Angela Davis were later indicted for conspiracy, kidnap and murder in Judge Haley's death. Quite apart from the importance Miss Davis contributes to this case, Magee is a man with very little formal education but who is an expert at framing writs and who has helped many of the other black convicts at one time or another.

I have been unable to pinpoint precisely when the Soledad Three, including George Jackson, were moved to San Quentin, but am sure it was before the Aug. 7, 1970 shootout. By that time they had become a cause celebre as an example of young blacks, potential leaders, railroaded into prison for small offenses and then kept there indefinitely on one pretext or another. George Jackson's book of "Letters from Prison" already had been published and had helped generate the campaign which Miss Davis was working on.

From the AP files for 1971 prior to the Aug. 21 incident, we get this:

March 22 -- Three days of tension at SQ ended, ~~marked~~ marked by 12 stabbings, two of them fatal. No cause ever ascribed, no explanation ever given. Dead were ~~black~~ inmates William P. Hanson, White, and Charles Ray Jounson, black. Four other whites and four blacks were injured.

June 6 -- inmate Stephen Kovac, convicted burglar and presumably white, stabbed to death while he and other inmates watched a show of Indian dancing. No weapon found, no indication ever given of the cause.

July 21 -- White guard Leo G. Davis, 38, fatally stabbed while guarding black inmate Herman Johnson, 25, in the prison hospital. Johnson had been stabbed in the throat and abdomen two days before by an unidentified assailant. Associate Warden James Park said Johnson was alleged to have been an informant in the second Soledad case, that of seven Soledad inmates accused of killing a white Prison worker (not an inmate) but ~~gaxixx~~ against whom charges had been dropped for lack of evidence.

Aug. 7 -- Edward H. Gonzales, 38 and presumably Mexican-American, fatally stabbed, no explanation.

Aug. 16 -- A one-day strike by 570 prisoners who demanded permission to wear long hair and moustaches, better meals, the standard "outside" minimum wage of \$1.84 an hour for prison work, and "an end to all forms of custodial harrassment and racial intimidation." The same series of accounts said there had been at least dozen non-fatal stabbings during the year in the prison, involving two or three guards and the rest to inmates, not further identified.

Both the Chronicle and the Examiner right after the Aug. 21 incident say there had been rumors inside the prison for two or three weeks beforehand both of an impending coup to get Jackson and others and a strike against "two or three guards." As you know, besides Jackson, two white inmates and three white guards were killed. The two white inmates had been moved to the adjustment center shortly before ~~axk~~ as tier tenders and may be suspected as stoolies. No indication even has been given as to the political complexion of the three white guards who were killed.

jdw6oct71