

EXPERIMENT—An aerial view of the new \$19,000,000 California Medical Facility near Vacaville, where the scientific rehabilitation of dangerous criminals is under way.

Using modern psychiatric techniques, the new type of prison is attempting to re-direct the energies of offenders from destructive to healthy and constructive channels.

Unique 'Prison' Tries To Rehabilitate Men

By MARJORIE RILEY

VACAVILLE, May 8.—In the peaceful hills behind Vacaville in upper Solano County a fascinating experiment is being carried out by a small group of men.

Men conducting the experiments are psychiatrists, administrators and staff members of the new \$19 million California Medical Facility, not quite completed but already in use. The "raw materials" with which they work are men; certified to the institution for crimes ranging from forgery to murder, including all known types of sex offenses.

RE-DIRECT ENERGIES.

The California Medical Facility is no ordinary prison, even though housed in its new cell-blocks are men whose crimes have made headlines all over the Nation. It is an institution for the scientific rehabilitation of men, whose energies, unlike the energies of men able to live in harmony with society, found destructive outlets; it is the task of the entire staff to re-direct these energies into constructive activities, so that once released from the facility, patients will go forth as men no longer hostile.

"Don't get the idea that our prisoners are coddled," said Harold V. Field, acting superintendent pending arrival of Dr. M. R. King from Terminal Island, "simply because we do not call this a 'prison.' We are dedicated to helping these men re-shape their lives, but at the same time it is our duty to keep them in custody. In a physical sense this is very much a prison; we have cells and bars and guard towers, and men who do not obey our rules are punished. But punishment is never of a punitive—rather of a helpful—nature."

The difference between this and an ordinary prison is an intangible sort of thing. While confined behind actual prison walls, men are at the same time taught to attain personal, inner freedom from the complexes and fears of a lifetime—freedom from the destructive impulses which have caused them to commit crimes. And they are "free men" long before they leave the institution for the outside world.

RELEASE FURY.

"In prisons all over the Nation, riots occur with alarming regularity," stated Dr. Nathaniel Showstack, director of clinical services. "Here, we have 'little riots' every day. These 'little riots' are our group psychotherapy sessions, where men, under the supervision of a therapist, rid themselves of their hates and their fury and bottled-up complexes through general discussion.

"Gradually," Doctor Showstack went on, "through these sessions, men begin to arrive at an understanding of themselves. At that point they begin the journey toward recovery."

Doctor Showstack will appear before the American Psychiatric Association in Atlantic City Thursday, where he will read his first paper on the results of the first five years experiment with psychotherapy in the prison field.

Participation in group therapy is not compulsory, it was pointed out, but of approximately 1,000 patients in the medical facility, the bulk of which is currently in the process of being transferred now from Terminal Island to Vacaville, 700 participate actively through choice.

INTERPRETS ACTIONS.

The therapist acts as moderator and interpreter, and at the conclusion of the session, comes before the group and summarizes the benefits of that meeting. Avoiding technical terminology, he interprets the forces that were at work, using the material that was actually pre-



HAROLD V. FIELD
Directs New Institution

sented by the patients themselves.

In explaining further, Doctor Showstack went on to say that the so-called "sex-psycopath," commonly considered "incurable," is quite amenable to rehabilitation, once he is able to understand and interpret the drives which have brought about his abnormal behavior.

Group psychotherapy, as applied here, is only in its fifth year in California prisons. At Terminal Island, the medical facility worked closely with the University of California and University of Southern California in the field of criminal psychology, and at Vacaville, facilities are also available for higher university training.

"We hope to become an integral part of this community," said Field. "We hope we are never referred to as a 'prison.' True, we have a custodial duty to perform, but with us, 'custody is treatment.'"

A new reception-guidance center is to be constructed on the grounds which will replace the temporary quarters now occupied by such a departmental agency at San Quentin Prison. Prisoners found in need of medical attention or psychotherapy may be kept at Vacaville; others may be certified to other institutions. Length of terms may vary from several months, to conceivably, a lifetime. There is at present one inmate in the hospital whose term has been set at "life without possibility of parole."

Doctor Showstack said:

"There are very few full-

time psychiatrists in American prison work today, and it is a field where trained men are urgently needed. When \$1.80 is being spent by the State on crime prevention—for every dollar being spent on education, it would appear that it's time for a few innovations. We must do more than lock up offenders; we must teach them to live in harmony with the outside world."

Doctor Showstack pointed out that the so-called "criminal mind" is often closed against a concept of Divine authority, as exemplified by God, as well as against authority as represented by the laws of our society.

That every one associated with the hospital is thoroughly imbued with a higher purpose is evident. This "prison" is filled with hope of eventual recovery.