

## Democracy in Spain: New Prison Construction Philosophy

The emergence of democracy in Spain at the end of the 1970s brought forth more commitment to fundamental human rights. The transition to a democratic government in Spain in 1979 saw the introduction of the *General Penitentiary Law*, which stipulates that sentences should be administered with regard for basic human rights and with an emphasis on education and reintegration.

In accordance with the *General Penitentiary Law's* considerations for humanization, security, dignity and durability in correctional institutions, a new correctional facility was built in Catalonia - the province with the most serious overcrowding problem in Spain. The Quatre Camins Penitentiary Centre opened in July 1989.

The architectural specifications and operational guidelines for Quatre Camins were based on three essential elements required to encourage positive change and the personal development of inmates: dignified accommodation, education and reintegration, and adequate security. To this end, emphasis is placed on adequate communication between inmates and their families; implementation of diverse types of treatment; multiple and varied facilities for all types of activities; modern health care facilities; reliable installations for security; and residential areas that create a climate of comfort while maintaining security.

The architectural plan of Quatre Camins is divided into five separate areas according to their proposed functions: inmates' area - residential modules, health care centre, education area, treatment centre; personnel area - administration and management, control centre; general service and exterior development - kitchen, laundry, maintenance; exterior security - guard structure; and external public -communications, supplies. Although physically distinct, these areas are interconnected by passageways. The vast passageways of the Centre are located on two floors, with the first floor being used exclusively by staff.

The Centre's design resembles a city. The neighbourhood, the primary element of the city, comprises four modules which accommodate the inmates. The modules form a nucleus in the centre, attached to which are the different areas mentioned above. The whole facility is closed off by an outer wall.

The four residential modules, each containing 126 cells, are organized around a vast, glass inner-square, with two modules on each side of the main circulation passageway. Each module's main floor opens onto a large elongated courtyard set up with patios to create an environment conducive to communication. The courtyard allows access to all the inmate activity areas. Cells are located on the two upper floors of the modules and are disposed of in a linear fashion, along either wall of a wide passageway, thus allowing for supervision from a single control area. Each cell contains a washbasin, toilet, wardrobe and table. For security purposes, windows have grids.

The focal point of Quatre Camins is the immense, glass, central square. Located at the junction of the four modules, it is the location from which the passageways radiate to allow communication with the other areas of the Centre.

The architectural point of reference of the Centre is the interior vigilance structure. Located at the heart

of the inner square, this high construction, separated from the main floor passage-ways, offers an overall view of Quatre Camins. An interesting feature of the vigilance structure, designed as a special support installation, is its prominent octagonal metal railing ring. An observation tower tops this metal structure and enables correctional officers to carry out occasional surveillance assignments.

Quatre Camins's security is reinforced by several perimetric subsystems: physical protection components, interior perimeter detection, exterior perimeter detection, closed-circuit television and security lighting. These subsystems replace surveillance and control normally accomplished by correctional officers from towers on the peripheral wall. Direct surveillance is done by motorized units.

The Quatre Camins Penitentiary Centre is seen as a real step forward in the design of progressive, efficient and humane correctional institutions in Spain.