

Convicts Revolt at Attica, Hold 32 Guards Hostage

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ATTICA, N. Y., Sept. 9—More than 1,000 prisoners seized 32 guards as hostages and took over part of the Attica State Correctional Facility today. As the outbreak began, the

prisoners broke windows, set fires and shredded fire hoses. At nightfall, negotiations to end the rebellion were still going on between inmates and correction officials.

In statements read aloud through a makeshift megaphone in the prisoner-held yard of Cellblock D, the inmates issued a list of demands that included coverage by state minimum-wage laws, freedom to be active politically, "true" religious freedom, an end to censorship of reading materials; the right to communicate with anyone at their own expense, "realistic rehabilitation" and "understanding," "not so much pork" and "more fresh fruit," "competent" doctors, more recreation and less cell time, and no reprisals for their uprising.

Commissioner Negotiates

Often during the reading of the statements, the words "racist" and "pigs" were shouted out.

Twice today, in efforts to obtain the release of the guards, State Correction Commissioner Russell C. Oswald met with groups of inmates who had barricaded themselves behind piled-up furniture, lengths of hose and coils of wire mesh in the southeast corner of the maximum security prison's 55-acre compound.

Late today Mr. Oswald waded through pools of filthy water, ankle-deep mud and shards of glass, followed by five newsmen who were asked

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by the inmates to accompany the Commissioner as witnesses at a three-quarter-hour negotiating session.

The session, which took place within the captured courtyard across a battered gray bench, was in vain, despite two written assurances that the prisoners would suffer neither administrative reprisals nor be put in solitary confinement.

The captured guards could not be seen, but it was known that they were ringed by groups of prisoners armed with baseball bats, tools and pieces of pipe and hose. The convicts were wearing football helmets and masks made up of towels and various kinds of cloth.

Tonight Mr. Oswald and the prison's superintendent, Vincent R. Mancusi, mulled over the demands of the prisoners, most of whom are black.

The convicts said they wanted specific visitors to see the conditions at the prison. Among those they listed were William M. Kunstler, the militant civil rights lawyer; Assemblyman Arthur Eve of Buffalo, a prison reformer; representatives of the Young Lords, the Black Muslims, the Fortune Society and the Solidarity Prison Committee of New York; Huey P. Newton of the Black Panthers, and Federal Judge Constance Baker Motley.

The rioting began at 8:30 A.M., when, right after breakfast, one group of prisoners refused to form into ranks to go on a work detail. The slight rebellion spread like wildfire, and soon about half of the of 2,254—about 85 per cent of

which is black—were running about the corridors, breaking windows, burning sheds and outbuildings, bedding and office furniture.

Smoke from fires in buildings and in the courtyard, and from the prison chapel and school, could be seen rising above the 30-foot concrete walls.

The prison employs 533 people, about half of Attica's work force. Of these, 378 are correction officers, 18 are correction supervisors and the remainder are civilians who work in the prison's hospital, farm, power plant and in educational, clerical and industrial jobs.

At any one time, from 50 to 100 guards patrol the prison's 28 buildings.

Word of the disturbances within the prison walls spread quickly through this town of 2,800 people, and sightseers from as far away as Buffalo, 40 miles to the west, and from Erie, Monroe, Wyoming, Genesee and Livingstone Counties came by bus, taxi, private automobiles and air to stand in front of the prison.

They would exclaim as smoke puffs rose above the walls. A local Lions Club set up a hamburger grill right outside the prison wall. Parents took children, who spent the afternoon either dashing about on the grass in front of the main gate or playing in fields directly across the Road, State Route 238.

Approximately 500 law enforcement officers, including state troopers from 14 counties, as well as deputy sheriffs and their staffs from surrounding counties and towns, began filing into the prison's main gate this morning.

The state troopers were under the command of Supt.

William E. Kirwan, and his chief of the bureau of criminal investigation, Capt. Henry Williams.

Captain Williams, a tall, heavy man, assumed tactical control of the combined law-enforcement groups, which deployed themselves around the inner perimeter of the prison, inside the four cellblocks, atop the prison walls and within the administration building.

Marksmen with .270-caliber rifles and sniperscopes were posted atop the highest building within the prison compound. They kept their rifles at the ready while Commissioner Oswald's negotiated with the rebels.

At least six guards who had been seized were injured, and the prisoners allowed them to go free. They were hospitalized with injuries of varying degrees.

One inmate and one guard suffered heart attacks and were taken by separate entrances from the prison to the town of Batavia, 12 miles to the north.

No shots were fired during the day of rioting, although a great deal of tear gas was propelled into the captured cellblock.

State correctional officers do not carry guns; their only protection is a three-foot-long oak billy club. The state troopers carried 12-gauge shotguns, with special loads of heavy slugs.

The first state official to arrive today was Commissioner Oswald, who flew here from Albany in a state plane. He arrived at 2 P.M.

Shortly after his arrival, Assemblyman Eve arrived. He is a member of the Assembly Codes Committee and of the penal institutions subcommittee of the Assembly.

After conferring on the grassy lawn between the main entrance and the administration building, the two men went inside shortly after 3 P.M.

Assemblyman Eve said he had heard that there was an incident last night at the prison in which an inmate threw a piece of glass at a guard and was sent to what is called "special housing" — the new prison terminology for solitary confinement.

He said there had been another report that, earlier this week, three prisoners had been beaten by guards and thrown into this "special housing."

The Assemblyman said he had received, not only from Attica Prison but from other state facilities as well, many letters of complaint about conditions in general.

Another visitor to Attica today was the prison's Protestant chaplain, the Rev. Dr. E. G. Rainer of Batavia, who said that the uprising had come as a surprise to him.

"It's one of those things that you would expect to hear through the prison grapevine, but I didn't have an inkling," he said.

Also standing by within the prison walls were the prison's physician, Dr. Selden Williams, and Dr. A. M. Bissell, a local Attica doctor.

As the state troopers continued to arrive during the day, they were followed by trucks carrying gas masks, riot helmets and clubs. Helicopters also began circling over the prison. A deputy in the Wyoming County sheriff's office said:

"This town has never seen such an accumulation of police power."

The helicopters were grounded shortly after 4 o'clock when the prisoners threatened to kill the hostages if the copters were not removed. To emphasize their demands, several hostages were paraded in the prison yard with pillowcases over their heads.