

Attica Convicts Rush Cellblock, Driven Back

Examiner News Services

ATTICA (N.Y.) — Convicts holding 30 hostages in a rebellion over state prison conditions surged from a cellblock in their control today to an adjacent cellblock held by lawmen. They were driven back by tear gas.

The incident came after a night of uneasy calm at the maximum security prison.

Overnight the inmates had obtained a federal court order prohibiting prison officials from taking any "physical reprisals" against them, according to State Corrections Commissioner Russell Oswald.

Four Civilians

Oswald said the inmates continued to hold the guards captive as well as four civilian shop foremen, trapped by the prisoners yesterday. The rebels were armed with pipes, baseball bats, homemade knives and stored tear gas at the Attica State Prison.

Oswald and other prison officials met again today with inmates and pledged to respect the federal injunction against retaliation. But they said they could not offer amnesty from criminal prosecution.

The order was signed by U.S. District Judge John T. Curtin of Buffalo.

Hostages

The inmates, all convicted felons, rioted yesterday, injuring a dozen guards, seizing hostages and setting fire to three buildings.

Prison officials said the hostages still being held apparently were well treated and had been provided with blankets. A doctor who was briefly admitted to treat them confirmed this.

But a number of hostages held earlier were released

—Turn to Page 6, Col. 4

after being beaten, stripped, and thrown from windows. One, guard William Quinn, 28, the father of two children, suffered severe head injuries when he was beaten and thrown from the second story. He was listed in very serious condition at Northside General Hospital in Rochester, where he was to undergo neurosurgery.

Oswald met with some of the rioters later in the day and gave a promise that there would be no administrative reprisals. This led to an uneasy truce.

Hundreds of inmates spent the night in a prison yard, watched from a distance by state police, sheriff's deputies and corrections officers.

The rioting inmates, 1280 of the prison's 2254, remained officially "out of control" early today.

15 Demands

After listening to the inmates, Oswald scrawled on a piece of paper: "No administrative reprisals against prisoners for activities Sept. 9, 1971."

The convicts also made 15 wide-ranging demands, including more religious and political freedom, an end to censorship of newspapers and magazines and improved parole and rehabilitation practices. They also asked pay at the state's minimum wage of \$1.85 an hour for work in prison shops.

The prisoners were surrounded at the time by 500 helmeted, gas-masked state troopers and by sheriff's deputies from five surrounding counties who were armed with shotguns, submachine guns and tear gas grenade launchers.

Prison officials were unable to offer a precise cause for the sudden flareup just before midmorning visiting hours, except to report a Wednesday night incident in which a guard and a prisoner were injured.

The hard core of the rebels

was said to number 500.

Before Oswald's meeting with rebel leaders, state police with no-holds-barred orders chased the rioting prisoners from three of four cellblocks they had initially seized.

Battling guards armed only with clubs, the convicts quickly gained control of all four cellblocks in their initial outburst. They smashed windows and furniture and set fire to the prison school, chapel and carpentry shop.

Several guards injured in the melee were stripped and set free clad only in blankets.

Cellblock D

As the force of heavily armed state troopers and sheriff's deputies assembled to deal with the rioters State Police Capt. Henry F. Williams ordered his men to secure the cellblocks.

"If somebody on the other side gets killed, well, that's the way it's gotta be," Williams said. "You're to take no crap from anybody. Don't lose your weapon and don't lose your buddy."

The troopers marched two-by-two into the 54-acre prison compound, but a direct confrontation between the convicts and troopers never materialized.

As the state police moved forward, the rioters retreated until they held only Cellblock D. During their retreat, eight guards were thrown from cellblock windows to the prison yard below.

The state police did not attempt to take Cellblock D in the hope of negotiations with the rioters.

In all, 12 guards who had been injured at the start of trouble and during the state police assault were treated for injuries at nearby hospitals.