

Statement by Commissioner Oswald

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ATTICA, N. Y., Sept. 13—
Following is the text of a
statement issued by State
Correction Commissioner
Russell G. Oswald at 10:40
A.M. today:

For the past four days I have been doing everything humanly possible to bring this tragic situation to a peaceful conclusion.

My main concern throughout has been for the safety of the hostages, the correction officers, the state police, National Guard personnel, local law-enforcement personnel and the inmates as well.

As you know, during this ordeal I have personally met with inmates on several occasions in areas under their control. I brought together a citizens' observer committee, most of whom were requested by the inmates, to assist me in bringing a peaceful resolution.

I understand and am sympathetic to many of the grievances expressed by the inmates and have demonstrated my commitment to deal with the issues they have raised by acceding 28 of 30 major inmate proposals in addition to progressive steps in programming already undertaken and implemented during my eight months in office.

A Federal court injunction demanded by the inmates to guarantee that no administrative reprisals would be taken was obtained overnight.

Convict Resistance Cited

In spite of all these positive efforts towards peaceful resolution on my part, the inmates have steadfastly refused to release the hostages



State Correction Commissioner Russell G. Oswald as the prison was rushed.

and meet with me on neutral ground for a final settlement.

It became apparent to me that the situation was seriously deteriorating and that the inmates, many of whom are confined to this maximum-security facility under life and long sentences, were not going to participate in reasonable negotiations. Tensions within the walls have steadily increased.

Saturday a correction officer, who had been subjected to a savage beating, died. Last evening one inmate was stabbed in the abdomen after a fight with another inmate.

The inmates who are in possession of tear-gas projectiles and knives have continued to fashion other weapons, have prepared booby traps and electrically wired barricades, and have spread gasoline extensively.

This morning I made a final attempt to resolve the

situation without resort to force. The inmates were requested to release the hostages unharmed immediately and to join with me in restoring order to the Attica Correctional Facility.

'Callous' Behavior

Additional time was asked for by the inmates, and the request was granted. It proved to be only a delaying tactic this morning. The leaders never returned, but callously heeded eight hostages within view with weapons at their throats. This is the way they chose to give me their decision.

That behavior was not different from their behavior on the street, where several were convicted of serious assaults, manslaughter and murder.

A few moments ago state police troopers moved into the unsecured areas of the institution to restore order, under specific orders to only use force to meet force, to protect the lives of the hostages. At the same time a riot-control gas was dispersed by helicopters in an effort to immobilize persons in the unsecured areas.

The action now under way was initiated with extreme reluctance, only after all attempts to achieve a peaceful solution failed.

To delay the action any longer would not only jeopardize innocent lives but would threaten the security of the entire correctional system in this state.

Armed rebellion of this type we have faced threatens the destruction of our free society. We cannot permit that destruction to happen.

It has been an agonizing decision.