

N. J. Governor Keeps Pledge in Prison Riot

RAHWAY (N.J.) — (UPI) — Gov. William T. Cahill today called together top law and correction officials to set guidelines for settling the demands of Rahway State Prison inmates who held five guards and the warden hostage during a 24-hour revolt.

The governor also scheduled a meeting with "community leaders" to discuss the disturbances yesterday,

during which 500 inmates controlled two wings of the maximum security prison until a no-reprisals agreement was reached between them and the governor.

Warden U. Samuel Vukcevic, recovering from "stab wounds" which inmates said a guard had accidentally inflicted, and the five guards were released about 10 p.m. Thursday. All were hospitalized but were reported in

good condition with no serious injuries.

Vukcevic held a bedside news conference at which he said he felt some of the prisoners' demands were reasonable.

He denied that the disturbance had been planned ahead of time by the inmates.

The disorder had "no organization, no leadership as

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such," he said. He also praised Gov. William T. Cahill's handling of the situation, asserting he was "very proud of our Governor."

Vukcevic said today only that he had been stomped. He added that his back wound was stitched by a prisoner, and said doctors had decided not to remove the stitches because of the competence with which the inmate had done them.

Governor's Pledge

Cahill said "there will be no brutality and we will meet with and talk to the prisoners in relation to their complaints."

Archibald Alexander, head of a citizens' committee advising the governor on penal affairs, said "there will be no reprisals of any sort taken against the inmates."

The prisoners complained about the medical care at the prison, food, high prices in the commissary, parole procedures, inadequate educational and vocational opportunities, disciplinary procedures, racial discrimination, lack of black cultural

classes, lack of religious freedom, delay of incoming mail, low wages, "meager" expenses given to released prisoner and lack of rehabilitative opportunity.

"To be treated as human beings is all that we ask of this administration," said the inmates' petition. "We are sincerely trying to correct the mistakes we have made in the past against other people."

"Tried Hard"

They also insisted the rebellion occurred only after inmates "tried every other possibility to bring about changes in the above-stated complaint . . ."

Cahill revealed that only the insistence of Dr. Maurice Kott, Acting State Commissioner of Institutions and Agencies, and another unnamed state prison official prevented an assault on the prison early yesterday by about 50 armed and helmeted police and guards from other prisons.

"It was because the hope was there of a negotiated settlement that we declined to use force," said Cahill. "Fortunately, I didn't have to make that decision."

Newsman's Role

Three newsmen, John Needham of United Press International, Carl Zeitz of the Associated Press and Stanley Terrell of the Newark Star-Ledger, met the rioters in the prison and arranged for the release of one of the hostages, Eddie Mullins.

Mullins, who brought out the list of demands, told officers, "Don't let this be another Attica. They don't want to be killed. They want to sit down and talk."

He was referring to the rebellion at Attica, N.Y., that resulted in the deaths of 32 inmates and guards.

The list Mullins brought

out was more of a public statement of complaints than a set of rigid demands.

Observers here said one of the main differences from Attica was the frame of mind of both the prisoners and officials — genuine concern to negotiate and prevent confrontation.

The rebellion erupted Wednesday night following a movie in the prison auditorium. Vukcevic and five guards were taken hostage by inmates who refused to leave the auditorium when another prisoner arose to speak on "injustices in society" and penitentiary conditions.