

Panel to Hear Grievances Of Rahway Prison Inmates



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Warden U. Samuel Vukceвич in Rahway Hospital yesterday

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WOODBRIIDGE TOWNSHIP, N. J., Nov. 26—Gov. William T. Cahill named a five-man panel today to meet with five representatives whom inmates at Rahway State Prison will select to discuss their grievances.

The Governor's pledge to consider the inmates' complaints was the key last night to the

Text of prisoners' demands is printed on Page 18.

release of the warden and five guards who had been held hostage for 24 hours.

The prisoners drew up a list of 14 grievances. They included complaints about medical care, food, high commissary prices, parole regulations, inadequate vocational training and educational programs, unjust disciplinary action, "racism" by guards, the lack of black history classes, alleged tampering with mail, inadequate work-release programs and the failure of the prison to attempt to rehabilitate them.

While he had not seen the list, the warden, U. Samuel

Vukceвич, said from his hospital bed that some of the demands the inmates had discussed with him were "certainly reasonable." He declined to say which ones.

He even had praise for his captors. After he and some of the guards had been hurt in the scuffle during the take-over of the prison, Mr. Vukceвич said, "The prisoners, I think, took special care that we were not in any way injured."

The three inmates who guarded him, he said, "were, if anything, nothing but gentlemen." The one threat he received, he said, took place when "yesterday morning a few of our more radical fellas, as they were going by, indicated that Vukceвич ought to go."

Inside the prison today, inmates were kept locked in their cells and fed sandwiches, according to several members of a team of eight county and state public defenders who spent the day inside.

Stanley Van Ness, the state's

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Public Defender, said the 12 inmates the lawyers had interviewed reported that none of the prisoners had suffered beatings by guards or policemen after the rebellion ended.

This contrasted with the reports from lawyers who visited prison inmates in Attica, N. Y., after the bloody revolt there last September. Inmates there were forced to run a "gantlet" of nightsticks as they were returned to their cells, the lawyers said.

The Rahway rebellion ended partly because "it just ran out of steam," Mr. Van Ness said. "It was cold and no lights."

A massive cleanup effort was begun inside the prison, according to the lawyers. Broken windows were boarded up with plywood to keep out the cold, but by the time dusk came, remnants of bedsheets still hung

of the grievances, and the release of the hostages was devised during talks with the inmates by Archibald S. Alexander Jr., chairman of the prison's board of managers.

Mr. Alexander emerged as a key figure in averting violence of the kind that ended the Attica rebellion, in which 43 persons died. At Rahway there were no deaths, and only minor injuries.

Assault Headed Off

According to George Richardson, a black State Assemblyman from Newark, it was the intervention of Mr. Alexander yesterday morning that helped head off an imminent assault by 150 state troopers who had been summoned to the prison.

Both Mr. Richardson and Mr. Alexander telephoned Ira Grayson, an aide to the Governor, the Assemblyman said, and argued against the assault.

Troopers were later withdrawn, and Thomas Durand, a press spokesman for the state's prison system, said Mr. Alexander then worked out a procedure with the inmates for the release of the hostages. The Governor accepted the idea, Mr. Durand said.

The plan called for the inmates to release one hostage as a show of good faith. They did. At 9:30 P. M., Alfonso Iorio was carried into an ambulance.

Then the three reporters—Carl Zeitz of The Associated Press, John Needham of United Press International and Stanley Terrill of The Newark Star-Ledger—were led into the cellblock.

Hostages Are Freed

"The negotiations almost broke down right then," Mr. Zeitz said later. Inmates shouted that they wanted guards and troopers out of the cellblock. The reporters were led out, then led back in, Mr. Zeitz said. The demands were received, and the remaining hostages freed.

"I'm very proud of our Governor," Mr. Vukceвич said yesterday. "I think the people of New Jersey are kind of lucky."

He said he believed that the uprising, which began during a movie Wednesday night, was spontaneous. "The fellas—the inmates themselves—I'm al-



United Press International

Gov. William T. Cahill on Thursday night announcing release of hostages.

from the outside bars of the two wings that had been under the prisoners' control.

One shee bore the words "Need Press," an appeal that was granted when three reporters entered the prison last night to receive the inmates' demands.

The plan for the presentation

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most positive had really no leadership as such, and consequently there were seven or eight, even 10, splinter groups," the warden said.

Mr. Vukceovich spoke to newsmen after his bed was rolled into the second-floor solarium of the Rahway Hospital, where he is recovering from stab wounds of the back and pelvis. He said that he was stabbed during the Wednesday night take-over, but that he did not know how or by whom.

The conditions of the four former hostages and three other guards remaining in the hospital were listed as satisfactory, and a hospital spokesman said all would probably be released within the next day or two.

Their injuries include contusions of the back and neck, minor stab wounds, a broken arm and head injuries.

Seventeen men were injured, according to state officials.

Vukceovich on Panel

Several lawyers said they understood that there had been some injuries suffered by inmates as well. This could not be confirmed by the prison system's spokesman, Mr. Durand.

He also declined to comment on the accusations contained in the prisoners' list of grievances because, he said, he had no "authority" to do so. Other prison officials were not available for comment about prisoners' complaints.

Governor Cahill's announcement of the negotiating panel was made from his office in Trenton, following two closed meetings with state officials and black and Puerto Rican leaders.

The panel is to include Superintendent Vukceovich, Mr. Alexander, Raymond Brown, a Jersey City lawyer, who is a member of the State Board of Control; Louis Pirone, superintendent of the Woodbridge State School, and Hector Rodriguez, director of the Puerto Rican Convention in Trenton.

Mr. Brown is black and Mr. Rodriguez is Puerto Rican.

The Governor explained that the 1,143 inmates in the maximum security institution would select 15 representatives "by ballots" and then pick the five from the 15 names.

Alfred C. Wagner, Director of Corrections and Parole, said that notices of the inmate elections would be posted on prison bulletin boards by Monday.

In their list of complaints, the inmates contended that "there is no vocational training at all" in the prison.

They said that "racist officers exercise their prejudicial attitudes toward blacks and Puerto Ricans all the time." They complained of "favoritism" for white inmates.

The prisoners charged that only three or four inmates are involved in a work-release program, and that upon release each man receives only \$25. "Inflation would relieve him of

that amount in less than a day," they declared.

Their appeals were devoid of the militant rhetoric that characterized many of the demands by the Attica prisoners.

The extent of the damage done to the prison by the rebelling inmates was not clear. A guard, Sgt. Louis Helmken, said the locks on the cells in one wing were broken, and as a result, he expected some inmates to be transferred. But Mr. Durand said he did not know whether prisoners would be moved.

Most of the police disappeared from the grounds, and by night the television cameras and the newsmen had departed.