

Captors 'Perfect Gentlemen' Warden Says

By RICHARD J. H. JOHNSON
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RAHWAY, N. J., Nov. 26—U. Samuel Vukcevic, the 43-year-old superintendent of the New Jersey state prison at Woodbridge Township near here, which was shaken by a 24-hour prisoner revolt that ended last night, said today that the three inmates who guarded him in a cell after he was injured "were, if anything, nothing but perfect gentlemen."

In an interview here this morning in the hospital where he is being treated for stab wounds of the back and pelvis, Mr. Vukcevic remarked that his resolve broke only once as he lay on the floor of the cell guarded by the prisoners awaiting the outcome of the confrontation between the inmates and the authorities.

"They made sure I had food," he said. "I ate with them and they shared their cigarettes with me. I quit smoking eight years ago, but I sure started again then," he said.

As a number of guards who had not been made hostage had noted in conversations outside the 1,143-inmate maximum-security facility, the warden said he was convinced throughout his ordeal that "there was no real leadership" in the rebellion.

Revolt Followed Movie

It began Wednesday night near the closing of the showing of a film attended by an estimated 500 inmates in the auditorium of the prison. A prisoner reportedly leaped to the stage and invited others to join him in a mass protest of prison conditions. At this point the ordeal began for the warden and five of his guards who were seized as hostages.

"Sometime after 9 o'clock," the superintendent recalled this morning, he was "advised of a disturbance in the auditorium."

"I went into the auditorium and was grabbed around the neck and knocked to the ground," he remembered. "I was kicked in the side and punched in the back," but he said, he was not aware as to when he suffered the stab wounds.

Several prisoners were said to have charged today in a



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Kenneth Koetsier of Toms River, N. J., 23, one of guards held hostage, in Rahway Hospital after release Thursday.

communication to the authorities that the warden had been stabbed by an excited guard who seized a sharp instrument from an inmate.

Following the initial assault, Mr. Vukcevic said, "the prisoners took special care that we were not in any way injured."

He then described a kaleidoscopic blur of shouts and movements and impressions.

"One of the fellows," he said, "if it wasn't for him we'd have real trouble. I had a puncture wound in the back. It bled quite profusely. He did a nice job on it. In fact, the hospital has not removed his sutures."

The warden was unable to say how it was that an inmate appeared with the equipment and the skill to apply surgical sutures to his wound in the midst of the confusion and terror of a prison revolt.

"The prisoners who kept me in the cell"—he was held for nearly 12 hours—"were gentlemen. The extremists were kept pretty well under control and

it was the biggest group that didn't want anything to do with it," he declared.

When a truce was reached last night and Mr. Vukcevic and Anthony Piscatelli, Benjamin Henderson, John Moteyunas, Alfonz Iorio and Kenneth Koetsier, all guards, were released from the cells in which they were held and brought to the hospital here.

Mr. Piscatelli, Mr. Iorio and Mr. Koetsier were treated for various injuries. Mr. Henderson and Mr. Moteyunas were discharged last night and Mr. Koetsier left the hospital this morning.

There was more bitterness directed against fellow guards than against inmates in the recounting of personal experiences by Mr. Koetsier. The 23-year-old guard interviewed at the hospital expressed deep reservations about returning to his job.

Telling of his experience while awaiting examination for possible head injuries, last mid-

night, Mr. Koetsier charged that a number of his fellow guards fled the auditorium when the disturbance began, leaving him and a handful of others to face the angry prisoners.

He said he sought to place himself beside the warden when he entered the room but he was pummeled to the ground.

What struck him most forcefully, he said, was the conviction that developed in the cell where he was held that the prisoners were prepared to kill all hostages if attempts were made to storm the prison from the outside.

"If the state troopers came in, the prisoners would have killed the hostages," he declared emphatically. "When they heard a report that the state troopers were about to enter the prison, the prisoners got out the shivs."

He said prisoners outside the cell in which he was held with hands and feet bound began shouting as the rumor about the troopers circulated: "This is going to be another Attica. We are going to do it up right."

Mr. Koetsier said he was in the auditorium with about 20 other guards when the commotion suddenly began.

A number of his fellow guards, he said, fled from the auditorium. He saw the warden enter, and tried to give him assistance. But the guard said he was beaten to the floor.

He was dragged off to a cell, the guard said, and at least one inmate he had "ticketed" for rules infraction earlier threw punches at him but he was given protection by his captors he said.

"The prisoners did not want to hurt or kill us unless the cells were stormed," he said. "They knew that we were their ticket and there were three types of them. Some wanted to kill the hostages, some wanted to spare them and the others appeared to be slightly confused."

Asked why he thought the rebellion occurred the youthful guard shook his head bewilderedly and said: "Why? Compared to other penal institutions Rahway is the most liberal and best prison in New Jersey. Those prisoners even have college classes."

Mr. Koetsier is a graduate of Hawthorne, N. J., high school.