

Attica Chief Says He Would Have Acted Quicker

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 29 —

The superintendent of the Attica Correctional Facility, taking sharp issue with the tactics of his superiors, told a House Committee today that he would not have tried to negotiate the release of hostages during the inmate rebellion in September, but would have attempted to retake the prison by force.

The superintendent, Vincent R. Mancusi was the first witness before the House Select Committee on Crime, which is looking into prison outbreaks at Attica, Raiford, Fla., and Woodbridge Township, N.J.

Under prodding by a committee member, Jerome R. Waldie, Democrat of California, said that following the uprising on Sept. 9, forces under his control recaptured major portions of two of the three cell-blocks that had been taken by prisoners.

"I would have pushed on, or attempted to," he told Representative Waldie. "I don't know what the result would have been. I would have gone as far as I could."

But the superintendent said, he was removed from active control of his prison with the arrival that afternoon of New York State Correction Department officials led by Commissioner Russell G. Oswald.

43 Deaths a Result

Forty-three men — 32 inmates and 11 hostages — died as a result of the uprising and the retaking of the maximum-security prison by an armed force of New York State policemen.

Mr. Mancusi, later in today's hearing, again repeated that he would have moved in "earlier" and "used the necessary amount of force to achieve the take-over."

Mr. Oswald is regarded as the architect of the negotiating process, which was aimed at freeing hostages and preventing bloodshed in Attica, a process that proved futile. He is scheduled to testify tomorrow.

Mr. Mancusi, scheduled for an hour's testimony this morning, was kept on the stand by committee members for almost three hours. A period of gentle, informational questioning led by the committee chair-

man, Representative Claude Pepper, Democrat of Florida, and the committee's chief counsel, Joseph A. Phillips, was changed abruptly when Representative Waldie was called upon.

He wanted to know, he said, why Mr. Mancusi had to be represented by counsel. Seated next to the superintendent for the whole of his testimony was a New York State lawyer, John H. Stenger. Mr. Waldie asked if there was a possibility that Mr. Mancusi might need his rights seen to.

"Are you under some restriction?" Mr. Waldie asked. "Why is it necessary to protect you? Are you saying that we can't question you in some areas?"

And then with no warning, Representative Waldie asked Mr. Mancusi if he could tell the committee where the information that "guards were being slaughtered . . . information that was proven not to be accurate," had come from. He wanted to know, he said, what "motivated the information" and "have you been advised not to answer?"

Questions Are Intense

Mr. Mancusi said that he was familiar with the account, that it had not originated with him and that he did not know when the statement was released. Finally he said, "I could not say I had direct knowledge" of the alleged slaughters. Mr. Mancusi was obviously flustered by the intensity of the questions, restating and pausing over his answers.

Before Mr. Mancusi could go on, Representative Charles E. Wiggins, Republican of California, leaned toward Representative Pepper and whispered and the chairman called a brief recess. When the committee reconvened, Representative Waldie was on another tack, forcing Mr. Mancusi to second-guess Commissioner Oswald, despite the protestations of Mr. Stenger.

Mr. Waldie then asked Mr. Mancusi to explain the "inexcusable statistic" that there existed only one black employe in Attica prison among 540 guards and other prison staff members. Mr. Mancusi said he supposed it was "society's responsibility."

Following questions relating to state budgetary problems, to complaint procedures available to inmates, to work release pro-

grams, and to a discussion of the "tenseness" that existed at Attica for almost a year prior to the rebellion, Mr. Mancusi was asked if he could list the causes of the rioting.

He discounted complaints about food, lack of recreation, censorship, problems of cleanliness, and the availability of supplies. He said that the prime reasons for the Attica uprising were "conditions of unrest . . . influx of radical literature . . . an increase in that segment that wants to destroy the system . . . channeling of troublemakers to Attica . . . failure to identify agitators." He repeated his recommendation that a special institution be built to house about 600 "agitators" and "troublemakers."

He said the establishment of what other state authorities have called a "maxi-maximum security prison" would "cause the problem to disappear" and "would slow them [the agitators] down."

Mr. Mancusi's statements about agitators and troublemakers were challenged by Representative Charles B. Rangel, Democrat of Harlem.

Mr. Rangel asked Mr. Mancusi if he had been instructed about what he should testify to. When Mr. Mancusi denied this, Representative Rangel suggested that Mr. Mancusi, since he had refused to talk with the press, had a history of non-cooperation.

Representative Rangel asked the superintendent to repeat his statement that he would have done things differently if he and not Commissioner Oswald had been in charge. "Would you have moved in earlier?"

"That's what I said," Mr. Mancusi answered.

"Fully armed?" Mr. Rangel asked.

"I would have used the necessary amount to achieve the takeover," the superintendent said.

Following Mr. Mancusi to the stand were William Ciuros Jr., president of the New York State and Municipal Employees Union, A.F.L.-C.I.O., the union that represents 4,500 guards; two guards who had been hostages — Capt. Frank Wald and Frank Strollo, and James Wilson and Arthur Weber, both former inmates of Attica.