

Freeing of Hostages Ends Uprising at Jersey Prison

By RONALD SULLIVAN

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YARDVILLE, N.J., Dec. 16—

An uprising at the State Youth Reception and Correction Center here ended this morning, less than 24 hours after it began, when two hostages were released unharmed by rebelling prisoners.

The uprising ended when the major grievance of the prisoners involving an alleged incident of guard brutality against an inmate was broadcast by a local radio station shortly after 10 A.M.

Then, with the sights of state troopers trained on them from nearby broken windows, the young prisoners released the two hostages and filed in an orderly fashion through the expansive, landscaped center courtyard back to their cells.

Halfway across they were hailed by the thunderous cheers of more than 500 other inmates locked in their cells.

The prison rebellion was the second in three weeks in New Jersey to end without violence. A brief rebellion at Rahway state prison ended on Thanksgiving Day after Gov. William T. Cahill negotiated the release of six hostages.

At a news conference this afternoon at the State House in Trenton, the Republican Governor said both uprisings emphasized the need for a legal means through which New Jersey prisoners could publicize their grievances without taking hostages.

'Spontaneous' Uprising

According to Edgar Wanser, the deputy chief keeper of Yardville, the insurrection broke out yesterday afternoon in the center's courtyard at about 1 P.M. He said that more than 100 prisoners had forced Richard A. Seidl, the center's assistant superintendent, into the first floor of a cell wing, where they also seized a guard, Ira Friedman.

An official statement by prison authorities described the outbreak as a "spontaneous disturbance."

The inmates were said to have locked the doors to the first-floor section and demanded an independent investigation of an alleged case of guard brutality, which they said occurred in the prison on Monday.

Thomas J. Durand, the official spokesman for the State Department of Institutions and Agencies, said that 600 or more of the center's 774 inmates had not been involved in the outbreak and that the trouble was confined to the south wing building.

State Attorney General George F. Kugler Jr. and Acting Commissioner Maurice Cott of the State Department of Institutions and Agencies were in charge of the force of 50 state policemen who were sent into the center in a show of force.

At 10:30 this morning, Mr. Kugler, tieless, his eyes red, emerged into the sunlight to announce by the side of a dirt road that the rebellion had ended.

Right behind him was Carl Zeitz, an Associated Press reporter in New Jersey, who served as an observer at the request of the inmates. He performed a similar role at Rahway, and he spent the night here inside the institution observing the negotiations.

And at his news conference later, Governor Cahill said he had ordered an investigation of the alleged incident of brutality. The Governor also said he would agree to an independent investigation by the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey, the same group that is representing the 43 Rahway inmates who were transferred to Yardville following the Rahway outbreak.

State correction officials said 43 Rahway inmates were being held here, apart from the other inmates, because of their "potential" for further trouble at Rahway.

The 43 inmates have been charged with disciplinary infractions stemming from the Rahway insurrection. They also face criminal charges now being prepared for the Middlesex County grand jury.

In contrast, Governor Cahill said that none of the Yardville inmates would face criminal charges because no one had been harmed and damage was minimal. However, he did not rule out the possibility of institutional disciplinary proceedings.

A Plan on Grievances

Mr. Cahill also said he intended to insure that the "legitimate complaints" of prison inmates throughout the state receive swift and proper attention. To this end, he said, he had invited all the civilian board managers of the state penal institutions to a Jan. 5 meeting in Trenton at which they will be asked to spend at least one night a week in the prisons listening to inmate grievances.

Those who cannot afford the time, would be asked to resign, the Governor said.

"This administration will not tolerate any brutality against inmates or any corporal punishment," Mr. Cahill said. "We intend to treat prisoners as human beings."

In a statement issued this morning and broadcast later, the prisoners here said, "We have now been subjected to the fascist tactics of police brutality."

The statement went on to say that the alleged incident of guard brutality had resulted in the hospitalization of an unnamed prisoner. "We feel that the officers that were involved in this incident should be prosecuted immediately."

The statement further asked for an independent investigation by the A.C.L.U.

Although Yardville holds offenders convicted of anything from smoking marijuana to murder, the inmates here are generally regarded as not as tough as the more hardened offenders at Rahway and Trenton state prisons.

The center, which was opened in 1968 on what was flat farmland about 15 miles southeast of Trenton, is regarded as a showcase of modern penal institutions.

Albert C. Wagner, the director of the State Division of Correction and Parole, said the center was not overcrowded. He also said its inmates had been selected because of their youth (most are between 19 and 21, although the legal limit ranges from 16 to 30) and for their prospects of rehabilitation.