

DEATHS DECRIED; CRITICS DISAGREE

State Officials and Inmates Are Targets of Blame

By LINDA CHARLTON

Public officials and private citizens reacted to the violent ending of the struggle at Attica Correctional Institution yesterday, all deploring the deaths but assigning the blame variously—to the inmates or to the state's correctional system.

One authority on prisons, Dr. Vernon Fox, who was deputy warden and chief psychiatrist at Southern Michigan State Prison in April, 1952, when a riot by 2,600 prisoners was

quelled with only one death, said he believed the use of force at Attica was a mistake:

"The primary reason for the use of force is always to create an image for the public," he said. The motive for yesterday's action by law-enforcement officials he said, was to give Governor Rockefeller's administration "an image of strength with the public."

Dr. Fox, who is the author of several books dealing with correction including one entitled, "When Prisoners Riot," added: "My method is to keep talking and outwait them."

Senator James L. Buckley, the New York Conservative-Republican, said: "There are times when the law ought to be merciful. This is not one of them." He called the "wanton murder" of the hostages "an act of barbarism pure and

simple," and said, "punishment of those responsible must be swift and authoritative."

Bobby G. Seale, the chairman of the Black Panther party, who was involved peripherally in the unsuccessful negotiations at the prison, blamed Russell G. Oswald, the state's Commissioner of Correctional Services, for the deaths.

Mr. Seale said he had been promised by the inmates that no harm would come to the hostages, at least until his return to the area from San Francisco yesterday. He charged that the state had deliberately ignored the prisoners' plea for more time.

"They [the officials] are guilty of murder," he said. "The best thing to do would be to charge Oswald and the others with first-degree, outright mass murder."

"The bankrupt New York State Correctional system" was blamed for the deaths by Representative Bertram L. Podell, a Brooklyn Democrat, who said he visited Attica four years ago while in the State Legislature, and had "predicted that it was a seething cauldron of discontent that was about to erupt. Reforms that were then promised never came to pass."

Mr. Podell, who served as chairman of the state's Joint Legislative Committee on Penal Institutions, went on:

"Unless immediate action is taken to protect both the lives of prison personnel as well as the civil rights of its inmates, this will be the beginning of action that will turn our state prisons into slaughterhouses."

He asked that a joint Federal-state task force be appointed to undertake a thorough in-

vestigation and report to both Governor Rockefeller and Attorney General John N. Mitchell within 60 days.

A similar warning that the Attica violence might trigger similar crises in other prisons came from William J. vanden Heuvel, the chairman of New York City's Board of Corrections, a citizens advisory group.

"The word of riots spreads like the whirlwind" to other prisons," Mr. vanden Heuvel said, adding that other prisoners "may erupt at any time."

Senator Jacob K. Javits said the Governor "had an awful decision which he had to make." The Republican senior Senator from New York urged that "the lessons learned" be used "to reform the prisons and corrections system of our state."