

2 Hostages Are Killed in France as 2 Fail in Jailbreak Attempt

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PARIS, Sept. 22—A prison nurse and a guard were found dead today after police blasted their way into a prison infirmary where they had been held hostage by two convicts. The police said that their throats had been slashed.

The incident, in the high-security prison at Clairvaux, about 100 miles east of Paris, created a sensation that threatened to obstruct efforts to bring about prison reform and the abolition of capital punishment.

Guards in another prison, at Poissy, began a 24-hour stoppage over what they said was inadequate security. Their unions called for a national demonstration on Friday.

Compared to Attica

The Clairvaux tragedy was widely compared to that at Attica, N. Y., last week, but there were great differences. The police at Clairvaux do not appear to have used their guns and the two convicts suffered only head injuries.

However, officials kept all outside observers from the prison, and the only information available came from the authorities.

They gave this account: At 8 A.M. yesterday, two convicts, one of them serving a life sentence for murder, the other 20 years for banditry, were taken to the infirmary for an examination. There they



Camera Press
René Pleven, Minister of Justice, rejected the inmates' demands for guns.

drew daggers. They took the guard on duty and the nurse as hostages and barricaded the entry.

By telephone, they began negotiations with the authorities. Essentially, they demanded three revolvers, a submachine gun and two cars equipped with radio in which to escape. The authorities tentatively agreed, but René Pleven, the Minister of Justice, said that he had ordered them not to deliver arms to the convicts in any case.

They did offer an undefined "indulgence." But at 4 o'clock

this morning, the police were ordered to go in. Gas and explosives were used to blow open two doors to the infirmary and the action was over in 30 seconds. But it was too late. The guard was dead and the nurse dying, their throats slashed, according to the authorities.

An early report that the guard had been slain hours earlier could not be verified and was not repeated in the official account.

"Everything we done that could have been done," Mr. Pleven told reporters here. But questions immediately arose.

Why, it was asked, was only one guard in the infirmary? And could two men with a record of violence arrive there without greater attention being paid them? The prison has 150 guards—all unarmed—for 500 prisoners.

Mr. Pleven said the matter was under investigation.

Harsh Conditions Condemned

The punishment of the two hostages also was raised. Capital punishment remains in the French legal code, but the guillotine has not been used since President Pompidou was elected more than two years ago and a movement for abolition has gained support.

"It is evident," Mr. Pleven told a questioner, "that crimes like those of Clairvaux do not work in the direction of a modification of the penal code." Reformers, on the other hand, argued that prison condi-

tions and harsh justice make convicts desperate. Prof. Michel Foucault of the College de France, a leader of the movement, said in an interview yesterday that French prisons were "among the most backward and cruel in the Western world."

He and other critics acknowledged that French prisons varied greatly, with several being relatively advanced. Clairvaux itself, a grim ancient monastic structure, is now one of two high-security prisons in France, and has been largely refurbished to improve conditions. But inmates are reported to prefer the gloomy La Sante in Paris be-

cause their families can get there for weekly visits and even more because of the tyranny of inmate chieftains at Clairvaux.

An indication of the overall situation was the announcement by Mr. Pleven two weeks ago of a reform measure, henceforth, under certain circumstances, prisoners would be permitted to subscribe to newspapers. Until now, all but bland weeklies have been banned. Television and radio are also banned, except in some prisons where lenient directors allow the radio programs—but switch off the news broadcasts.