

Prisoners Solidarity Committee

Special 8-page newsletter on Attica

Tom Soto reports
from inside Attica

...see centerfold

A Report From Inside Attica



Contact the Prisoners Solidarity Committee at 58 West 25 St. New York, N.Y. 10010



Rockefeller's assault troops entering Attica prison for the massacre.

ATTICA, N.Y., Sept. 14— Billionaire Governor Rockefeller yesterday ended with a massacre the greatest prisoners' rebellion in modern times. Reflecting the blatant racism that has created the concentration camp system in this country and has led to prisoners' revolts nationwide, a guard held hostage by rebelling inmates at Attica State Prison emerged from the prison's main gate free and unharmed with a violent shout of "White power!" Behind him, within the prison walls, spewed a carnage of blood and bodies, including 28 dead prisoners and hundreds wounded, some fatally. Also dead were 9 guards held as hostages, all, according to later autopsies, killed by bullets as 1000 state troopers, sheriffs' deputies and prison guards armed with shotguns, automatic weapons and nausea gas stormed the prison with guns blazing. "It resembled the aftermath of a war," some observers said, and they were right. Attica, with its prisoner population 85 per cent Black and Puerto Rican and the high political consciousness and clenched fist salutes displayed during the rebellion, was one more battle in the continuing war for national liberation of the Black and Brown populations in the United States. Few believe that it will be the last.

On Thursday, September 9, over 1000 prisoners, long abused by the all-white racist guard force, a vicious prison system, and an economic and political dictatorship held over the poor and working class of this country by the rich, rose up to overpower their tormentors. Within minutes, the inmates seized Cell Block D and 32 guards. Then, from a makeshift megaphone, the inmates issued their demands, many of which reflected the high political content of the rebellion.

POLITICAL DEMANDS RAISED

"An immediate end to the agitation of race relations by the prison administration of this State," the prisoners demanded. An end to the racial discrimination against Brown and Black prisoners by the parole board; a replacement of the present parole board appointed by Rockefeller with a board elected by the people; the right to labor union membership while working in the prison and State and federal minimum wage instead of the present slave labor; constitutional right to legal repre-

THE PRISONERS OF ATTICA

Unity and courage VS. Rockefeller's machine guns

sentation at parole board hearings; "an end to the segregation of prisoners from the mainline population because of their political beliefs"; an end to guard brutality against prisoners; and, later the prisoners added their demands for amnesty from criminal prosecution and "speedy and safe transportation out of confinement to any non-imperialist country."

"Many prisoners believe their labor power is being exploited," said the declaration of demands, "in order for the state to increase its economic power and to continue to expand its correctional industries (which are million-dollar complexes), yet do not develop working skills acceptable for employment in the outside society, and which do not pay the prisoner more than an average of forty cents a day. Most prisoners never make more than fifty cents a day. Prisoners who refuse to work for the outrageous scale, or who strike, are punished and segregated without the access to privileges shared by those who work; this is class legislation, class division, creates hostilities within the prison."

The prisoners set up a People's Central Committee which included Black, Puerto Rican and white members, organized their own typing pool and sound system. As for the hostages, according to Tom Soto of the Prisoners Solidarity Committee who saw them, the guards were being well treated, undoubtedly much better than the guards had ever treated the prisoners.

ROCKEFELLER REJECTS AMNESTY

Nelson Rockefeller, billionaire governor of New York, disagreed. "To do so (grant amnesty) would undermine the very essence" of American society, he said. From the barbed-wired seclusion of his 3000 acre private estate at Pocantico Hills, Rockefeller rejected the plea of the mediating committee for him to join the negotiations. Instead, this brother of the head of Chase Manhattan Bank ordered the full mobilization of the National Guard units in western New York to prepare a massacre of Attica's inmates.

The demands of the prisoners were never seriously considered, and the most fundamental of the demands, amnesty, was never considered by the State. To the prisoners, this was crucial as many were in danger of being framed upon murder charges for the death of a sympathetic guard killed by other guards when the rebellion broke out.

Meanwhile, the troop buildup outside the prison continued. Sheriffs' deputies poured in from 13 surrounding counties in their own automobiles, armed with shotguns and 30-30 hunting rifles for "the turkey shoot," as one racist called it. It was clear that Rockefeller's government was not negotiating in good faith.

Under cover of "negotiating," they were preparing the massacre, as hundreds of National Guard troops were moved into the area on Sunday. Police outside the prison grew increasingly hostile to arriving crowds of prisoners' supporters and relatives. One state trooper leveled his shotgun at members of a delegation of the Prisoners Solidarity Committee and growled, "Get out of the roadway or we'll wipe you out!"

Meanwhile, relatives of prisoners were denied access to the prison grounds by police, although relatives of hostages were allowed in. A roadblock

one mile from the prison sealed off the prisoners from their relatives and outside supporters. As far as the State was concerned, the prisoners' families had no rights. A curfew was also imposed in the town of Attica to prevent angry Black, Brown and white supporters from exercising their right to be at the scene.

Rockefeller's government had also decided the prisoners had no rights. Not even the right to live.

Yesterday, Monday morning, the State's mobilization was completed, and by 8 a.m. 1700 troops armed with machine guns, automatic rifles, tear and nausea gas, shotguns, and high pressure hoses were poised for the attack. At 9:45, Oswald gave the signal for the attack to begin. Two Army helicopters circled over the northeast corner of the 55-acre compound where the prisoners were gathered. One dropped canisters of nausea gas onto Cell Block D, while the other swooped down on the men below, firing automatic weapons in the crowd of prisoners, shooting them down in "Vietnam" fashion. The prisoners had no weapons to return the fire but defended themselves as valiantly as they could. Their only means of defense were hand-made weapons. It was a massacre.

CAPITALIST PRESS LIED!

Yesterday the capitalist press was full of horror stories of hostages with their throats cut, mutilations and executions. The racist hysteria against the prisoners' uprising was being carefully fanned. Today the truth came out — the guards were all killed in the same murderous assault by police and national guards on the prisoners.

So far, twenty-eight prisoners and nine hostages were reported killed, hundreds of prisoners wounded. The 28 surviving hostages were taken for treatment to a nearby hospital, while the hundreds of wounded prisoners waited for treatment in a small room in the prison, 8 by 10 feet, the floor covered with blood. "It's the worst thing I've ever seen," said one doctor emerging from the prison gate in a blood-stained gown.

Asked if he had any second thoughts after seeing the resulting massacre, Commissioner Oswald patted his huge stomach and calmly replied, "No, I don't." Nelson Rockefeller had no second thoughts, either. He agreed that the security of the whole rotten prison system was at stake. The highly political content of the prisoner demands was also a direct challenge to the dictatorship of wealth enjoyed by millionaires like Rockefeller. This was not just a prison rebellion, but part of a larger class war going on across the country. This was recognized on a national level as President Nixon personally phoned his congratulations to the Governor. Rockefeller was, of course, delighted.

The people were not. Prisons around the country stirred with anger. In Baltimore City Jail, the second revolt within a year broke out, and prisoners of Cleveland County Prison also rebelled. Throughout New York, Rockefeller ordered all inmates in the state's maximum security prisons confined to their cells, in fear of spreading rebellion. Rockefeller, sipping his mint julep at his Pocantico Hills estate, may have been delighted with Nixon's support, but he was frantically worried about the rising tide of people's vengeance that is increasingly threatening to sweep him and his wealthy class into the dustbin of history.

Breaking through the walls of isolation

What is the Prisoners Solidarity Committee?

Once in a very great while, a rich man goes to prison. Maybe he's taking a six-month rap for a company that defrauded the people out of millions; when he gets out after his brief stretch, he's set for life. And even while he's in, every little comfort is provided for him, so that the time passes as pleasantly as possible.

Most of all, he is never really isolated, never forgotten. His lawyers visit him constantly, the guards treat him like a "gentleman," and he is able to conduct his business affairs from prison.

Prisons weren't made for people like this. The fact that a handful of them may be in a few federal institutions is largely an accident.

But the prisons are full, overflowing, exploding with poor, oppressed men and women for whom prisons have meant the end — of life, of happiness, of friends and family. The first stretch becomes a stigma that dooms a young person to a life behind bars. The prisoner never sees a lawyer, is prevented from defending himself, is estranged from his or her family just out of the sheer impossibility of visits to isolated prisons, and can look forward to desperation and disappointment when and if he ever hits the streets again.

For thousands of prisoners, especially the large percentage of Black and other oppressed people routed into the prisons from birth, these conditions have become unbearable. The terrible isolation imposed by the racist authorities has been broken again and again in the only way left to human beings who have been literally sealed in their own tombs: by open rebellion. These rebellions are specifically directed at the numberless injustices that read like a description of the Chamber of Horrors; but they are also something more.

They are a passionate cry to brothers and sisters on the outside, a desperate affirmation that they are alive, there on the inside; they are human beings who, while treated worse than animals, have not been crushed, whose spirit lives on in rebellion.

The Prisoners Solidarity Committee is another absolutely indispensable product of this new spirit. It was formed less than a year ago, when prisoners at Auburn, N.Y., wrote to organizations

on the outside for help. Youth Against War & Fascism responded, and soon helped form the Prisoners Solidarity Committee. The committee has expanded to many cities since then, and includes relatives of prisoners and released prisoners themselves.

When news of the PSC reached the jails, it released a dammed-up flood of letters from brothers and sisters telling of the indignities, the brutality, the pain that is a daily part of prison life. But these letters all told something else. They were not pathetic appeals from beaten people; they rang with hope and strength and willingness to struggle. Moreover, the writers were thrilled that they were finally breaking out of their isolation, that people outside were listening and working with them.

The PSC published some of these letters in the pamphlet, "Prisoners Call Out: Freedom!"

The PSC raised some money with this pamphlet and social affairs, and rented a bus

so that prisoners' relatives could get to Auburn and visit them. For many of them, it was the first visit in years.

When the Auburn 6 had several court hearings, the PSC got sizable demonstrations of support, even in blizzard conditions. More and more, the PSC became a vehicle whereby the prisoners themselves could speak to the people outside, could generalize their struggle, fuse their grievances and their hopes into the main current of rebellion that is rising in the country as a whole.

Thus it was small wonder that when the heroic Attica prisoners met with a small group of observers during the rebellion, it was the PSC delegate, Tom Soto, who they most wanted to see. It was to him that they entrusted the greatest number of messages, for their loved ones and for the movement as a whole.

The PSC, on hearing of the rebellion, had immediately mobilized all its strength: it sent a delegation to Attica, arranged transportation for relatives, and organized many demonstrations throughout New York State and in several major cities elsewhere. The prisoners knew about all this, and knew that what they had to say would be heard on the outside.

At the most difficult moments, when ruling class hysteria against the prisoners reached its height, the PSC announced from inside Attica that it unconditionally supported the prisoners' demands. A further bond of love and trust was forged in those tense hours.

The isolation of the prisons has been permanently shattered. Even the highest concrete wall, the darkest cell, the cruelest solitary "hole" can no longer hold the terror it once had; for 1500 men at Attica have looked the worst in the face.

ATTENTION: PRISONERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Contact the Prisoners Solidarity Committee if we can help you in any of these ways:

- Help you get in touch with your loved ones. (The PSC has many, many messages from the Attica prisoners. Not all of them are supplied with addresses. If you are trying to get news about or to anyone in Attica, contact the PSC and we will help.)
- Legal assistance. The PSC will try to get legal help for prisoners and their families.
- Transportation. We are raising funds to charter more buses so that relatives can visit prisons in remote areas.
- Publicity. The PSC puts out pamphlets, leaflets, press releases and organizes demonstrations to make the voices of the prisoners heard.

Anyone wishing to help in the work of the PSC should also contact us at the following chapters:

NEW YORK CITY
58 West 25th Street

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
69 Rohr Street

DETROIT, MICHIGAN
2515 Woodward

BUFFALO, NEW YORK
939 Main Street

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
P.O. Box 8875

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN
150 E. Juneau Avenue

SYRACUSE, NEW YORK
120 Dell Street

CLEVELAND, OHIO
Box 2576, East Cleveland

WILMINGTON, DELAWARE
P.O. Box 972

— Attica demands

(continued from PSC 8)

20. We Demand an immediate end to the agitation of race relations by the prison administration of this State.

21. We Demand that the Dept. of Corrections furnish all prisoners with the services of ethnic counselors for the needed special services of the Brown and Black population of this prison.

22. We Demand an end to the discrimination in the judgment and quota of parole for Black and Brown people.

23. We Demand that all prisoners be present at the time their cells and property are being searched by the correctional officers of state prisons.

24. We Demand an end to the discrimination against prisoners when they appear before the

Parole Board. Most prisoners are denied parole solely because of their prior records. Life sentences should not confine a man longer than 10 years as 7 years is the considered statute for a lifetime out of circulation, and if a man cannot be rehabilitated after a maximum of ten years of constructive programs, etc., then he belongs in a mental hygiene center, not a prison.

25. We Demand that better food be served to the inmates. The food is a gastronomical disaster. We also demand that drinking water be put on each table and that each inmate be allowed to take as much food as he wants and as much bread as he wants, instead of the severely limited portions and limited (4) slices of bread. Inmates wishing a pork-free diet should have one, since 85% of our diet is pork meat or pork-saturated food.

26. We Demand an end to the unsanitary conditions that exist in the mess hall: i.e., dirty trays, dirty utensils, stained drinking cups and an end to the practice of putting food on the tables hours before eating time without any protective covering over it.

27. We Demand that there be one set of rules governing all prisons in this state instead of the

present system where each warden makes rules for his institution as he sees fit.

IN CONCLUSION

We are firm in our resolve and we demand, as human beings, the dignity and justice that is due to us by our right of birth. We do not know how the present system of brutality and dehumanization and injustice has been allowed to be perpetrated in this day of enlightenment, but we are the living proof of its existence and we cannot allow it to continue.

The taxpayers who just happen to be our mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, daughters and sons should be made aware of how their tax dollars are being spent to deny their sons, brothers, fathers and uncles of justice, equality and dignity.

* * *

The above demands were presented at the outset of the rebellion. In addition, the prisoners made the three key demands of passage to a nonimperialist country, the firing of warden Mancusi, and complete amnesty. These key demands were unconditionally refused by Rockefeller and his prison hacks.

Report from inside Attica

"We'll win or die together"



TOM SOTO

Following is an interview with Tom Soto of the Prisoners Solidarity Committee. Tom Soto was invited by rebelling inmates to Attica Prison last Thursday at the beginning of the uprising. He spent four days in the prison talking to inmates and trying to give voice to their demands.

WW: Why did you go to Attica?

Tom: The inmates who participated in the rebellion at Attica made it clear in their demands that they wanted a representative from the Prisoners Solidarity Committee (PSC) to come to the prison. Many of the prisoners had heard of the support work we were doing at the Tombs, at Auburn, at the Women's House of Detention in New York City and at many other prisons around the country.

They asked that the PSC be present at Attica in order to give voice to their demands. Our organization was distinguished in this respect from some of the people present on the committee of civilians who were asked to go up there by Governor Rockefeller and State Commissioner Oswald to negotiate in the interest of the state.

WW: Do many of the prisoners at Attica know about the PSC?

Tom: Many of the prisoners I spoke to — Black, white, Puerto Rican, Chicano — were aware of our activities and were heartily behind us. Several of these prisoners had been at other prisons and were aware of our activities that way. Many of them know about the bus program we arranged to transport relatives to prisons throughout New York State. And several of the inmates we had actually had correspondence with.

WW: How did you get into the prison?

Tom: Well, when the PSC was informed on Thursday that we were wanted by the inmates, our Buffalo committee immediately contacted the national staff in New York City. I took a plane to Buffalo the next morning and got to Attica Prison at about 9 a.m. I should add that representatives of the PSC were outside Attica all day and night Thursday. As soon as I got there, I informed the authorities at the prison that I had been asked by the inmates to be up there and requested to see them immediately.

I was forced to wait from 9 a.m. until approximately 11 o'clock that night before I was finally allowed to enter. During this time, the state officials who were asked to come to Attica by Oswald and the government were flown in and brought to the prison by state police.

When these official "negotiators" arrived at the prison around 4 p.m., I informed them all of who I was, but it wasn't until about 11:00 that night, after everyone else had gone inside, that I was finally admitted. I feel that the reason I was admitted at all was first because the inmates wanted the PSC there, and second because three Puerto Rican brothers who got inside before me threatened to tell the inmates that the PSC had been there for two days and wasn't being allowed inside. The authorities, fearing this kind of pressure, were forced to allow me into the prison.

I WAS THERE TO SUPPORT PRISONERS' DEMANDS

As soon as I went up to the office where the different state representatives, senators, assemblymen, etc., were, I was informed that I had to conform to the discipline of the group, that I could not speak independently, and that my only role would be to listen to them talk with the inmates. I immediately responded by telling them that I was not a member of any negotiating committee or any mediating team; I was there as a representative of the PSC to talk to the brothers inside, to support their demands unconditionally, and to give voice to their demands on the outside. I made it very clear that I had nothing to do with them.

WW: Once you were in the prison, did you get to talk to many of the prisoners? Could you describe to us what you saw?

Tom: I was taken inside the main gate of the prison, in through the administration building, then through a series of tunnels, electrically controlled steel gates, and finally to a tunnel near A Block — liberated territory guarded by prisoners. Separating the inmates on one side and all the guards and state officials on the other side were bars which could be opened by a key. On the administration side there were about 30 to 40 guards equipped with sub-machine guns, sniper rifles, gas grenades, and shotguns.

The inmates on security in the tunnel in A Block were informed when I or others from the committee were coming through. We were led into the passage-way two at a time, each of us was searched twice — once by the guards and then a second time by the inmates on their territory. As soon as the inmates recognized the PSC button that I was wearing, and a button that said, "Stop the War Against Black America," they shook my hand and greeted me warmly.

These inmates, some wearing football helmets and headaddresses, were extraordinarily well organized. They had already devised a very tight security system. We were led from this tunnel down through A Block, into B Block, then through the courtyard of B Block into the tunnel that separates B Block from

D Block. As the inmates who were greeting us saw that I was from the PSC, I got salutes of "All Power to the People" and "Right on." The response to us was tremendous.

It was pitch dark in the prison — this was between 11:00 and 12:00 Friday night. When we crossed from B Block through the tunnel into D Block, the liberated area, I was totally amazed at the incredible sight in the yard of D Block. I saw approximately 1500 inmates there. They were organized into a security system, standing with arms locked in circles five rows deep.

BLACK, BROWN AND WHITE ARMS INTERLOCKED

The greeting that I received, because I am Puerto Rican and representing the PSC, was very moving. Prisoners gave me tremendous hugs of solidarity, there was enthusiastic shaking of hands and slogans shouted, "Que Viva Puerto Rico Libre" and "All Power to the People." But the most striking thing of all was that as I moved through the courtyard among the tents they had set up, I could sense the terrible oppression these men had been through and their comradeship, strength and unity. I saw Black arms interlocking with white arms, interlocking with Brown arms. It was total unity among all of them.

The inmates asked the committee of observers if we were truly with them, would we be willing to stay overnight in the prison. Of course, the politicians refused, replying that they could not stay in the institution. I had already agreed to stay the night, along with several other Puerto Rican brothers.

After the politicians left, I got to speak with hundreds of Black, Puerto Rican and white prisoners; I spoke most extensively with the brothers assigned by the prisoners to be my security guards. Two were Puerto Rican, two Black and one white. They escorted me throughout the liberated area and took me wherever I requested to go, telling of the racist, inhuman treatment and conditions that led to the rebellion. The inmates informed me that the authorities had turned off the water, that they had no food supplies, that they had no toilets, that they were being starved while prison officials were telling the people outside that food was getting in regularly. The authorities

telling him to come back when he had learned to speak English. Another brother, William Jamison, I was told, had complained of being ill, but was told it was just in his head. After a week in the observation ward he was returned to his cell. The next day he died.

All of the inmates said that they had been brutally beaten at different times, that they had been gassed, that they were generally treated like animals, that there were no Black or Puerto Rican history books available to them. One of the brothers suggested that one of the demands should be that everybody be released from special housing (solitary confinement).

TOUR OF THE LIBERATED AREA

Upon my request, the inmates took me on a tour of the entire liberated area. I saw the cells, smaller than 8 feet by 6 feet, with just enough room for a bed and about 3 feet that you could actually walk back and forth in. Every window in the prison had thick, three-quarter-inch bars. (I say this because one of the claims of the prison hacks is that a guard had been thrown out of a window on the first day of the uprising. This is absurd because there are no windows without bars.)

The brothers complained of the short periods for exercise, amounting to about one-half hour a day. And, of course, in the winter there was no yard at all. They informed me that their blankets were washed once a year; they complained about the diet that had almost no protein, the terrible housing, the one 5-minute shower a week, and the sexual assaults by guards. There were some incidents described to me that were so horrible that I cannot remember the details, my mind refuses to recall them. The misery and terror that exists in Attica can only be compared with a Nazi concentration camp. In fact, the entire yard looked like a Palestinian refugee camp in the Gaza Strip.

I'd like to quote one small note given to me by a young brother. It kind of sums up all the pain and anger that the inmates feel. It reads:

"We have been constantly oppressed and maltreated by the fascist pigs far too long. We are human beings with human desires and we demand an end to brutality, prejudice, and injustice and we

the PSC, the Lords, the Muslims and several Puerto Rican brothers — were locked up in a separate room under armed guard and threatened with being shot if we tried to leave, while the others were meeting with Oswald to draw up a list of 28 proposed demands.

WW: On Saturday night, when the proposals of Oswald and the politicians were read to the prisoners, how did they react?

Tom: At first, there was dead silence, a deep sense of betrayal and then anger. I let the prisoners know that I had nothing whatsoever to do with those proposals, that I, along with several other brothers, had been locked in a room under armed guard while the talks were going on.

Throughout the reading of the demands, everyone was totally silent. First of all, there was no amnesty. In fact, in a letter written by the DA on this very subject of amnesty, the DA said that he would prosecute anybody who he felt had committed a "crime." That's some amnesty. The proposals gave no guarantees; they were not legally binding in any way and the prisoners knew it.

For example, on the demand for minimum wages, Oswald only said he'd recommend that, but then the budget could be allotted to allow only 25 cents an hour and his word would be worthless. Another proposal said that the prison would provide inmates with "adequate food, water, and shelter." That word "adequate" is so ambiguous, it's meaningless. The prison officials already claim that prisoners receive adequate food, water, and shelter.

Well, the inmates got up and said that the authorities must think we are bullshitting because that's not what we were asking for. All that was simply words and had no meaning. A Puerto Rican brother got up and very eloquently stated, "We have suffered, we have died, we have fought, we have been dehumanized, we have been raped, we have been beaten, we have been gassed; now they give us a bullshit piece of paper... The oppressed cannot accept this!"

WW: How did the prisoners react to Oswald's ultimatum?

Tom: First of all, in his ultimatum, Oswald implied that the whole committee had approved all of his recommendations. Consequently, the inmates felt that the committee had betrayed them. When we got to see the prisoners Sunday night, they were angry, and rightfully so. The prisoners answered Oswald's ultimatum by saying that they would stand firm on the demand for amnesty and the next move was up to the state. The issue was total amnesty; everything else was secondary.

They said that the proposal that Oswald had submitted was bullshit, and they were tired of playing games. He had to decide, did he want to negotiate or did he want a massacre? Of course, now we know that Oswald and Rockefeller chose the massacre. They never seriously negotiated with the prisoners; they were just waiting for the kill.

FACING 40 MACHINE GUNS

WW: What was your last impression at Attica before you left?

Tom: There is one scene that I'll never forget. I was leaving the prison for the last time, late Sunday night. As I entered corridor A leading into the liberated area there was a brother whom I happen to know personally standing on security. His arms were folded as he faced 40 machine guns on the administration side. On his shirt he was wearing a PSC button. Today, I don't know if he is alive.

Another thing I'll never forget: a brother whom I rapped with a long time noted the ring on my finger and asked about it. I told him it had been made from an American fighter bomber shot down by Laotian women over Laos. I gave it to him and he considered it to be a very dear show of solidarity between the PSC and the prisoners and the Indochinese people.

As I left, I knew that I might never see these men again. The atmosphere was filled with tension. There were many hugs and kisses, many goodbyes, many messages to families on the outside. Yet there was also an incredible strength and determination among all the prisoners to fight for their just demands or die in the attempt.

Finally, I'd like to add that the prisoners don't view themselves as criminals. They know that they — the Black people, the Puerto Rican people, the poor white people — are not "criminals" but oppressed people, driven by poverty. They know that they have been denied proper education; they have been denied jobs; they have families to support; and they know that the only way for poor people to survive, for those with no hope of getting jobs, was through stealing. Most of them were there for petty crimes of stealing \$20 or \$100 or \$200, in other words, crimes of survival.

They see themselves as victims of a racist society which oppresses and exploits their people. They see the Rockefeller, the Mellons, the big corporations, the banks, those who rob and steal their labor for profit, as the real criminals.

The inmates always told me that they had no intention of killing any of the hostages. They took them because there was no other way to redress their grievances. The guard-hostages were the only thing that stood between the prisoners and sudden death. As it turned out, Rockefeller decided to sacrifice even the guards rather than to give in to the just demands of the prisoners. The blood of all the dead is on his hands.

But one thing the rulers of this country never seem to learn — they think repression, repression and more repression will end the oppressed people's uprisings. In fact, just the opposite is true. The men at Attica were so oppressed, so tortured, so brutally treated that finally they chose to revolt and even die rather than endure life behind those walls any longer. They knew that many would die, yet they chose the dignity of struggle rather than the misery of submission.

The Attica uprising was an historic event. It will live forever in the hearts and minds of the oppressed around the world. If the class solidarity shown there is any indication of the future, the cause of the oppressed and poor cannot fail. No prison rebellion in U.S. history has ever been so politically conscious and so determined. The Prisoners Solidarity Committee felt honored to have been invited by the prisoners to support them and is pledged to continue our work on their behalf.



were claiming that they were sending in food three times a day, but in reality the 1500 inmates were being sent only 1000 sandwiches with a few large cans of coffee a day. The sandwiches consisted of two pieces of bread and one piece of coldcut in between.

INMATES GRIEVANCES

All the inmates I spoke with looked physically worn out. Many were dehydrated and suffered from vitamin deficiencies. But their spirit was always very strong, very united and very determined. There was real class solidarity among Black, Brown and white, even though the word "class" was not mentioned. I'd like to say here that never in my entire life have I seen so many people of different nationalities united in such a way. They all saw themselves as exploited and oppressed — all together.

One white brother from North Carolina spoke, describing how Black people were mistreated in his home town. He told how much he had learned about racism in prison and wound up his talk by saying, "I want everyone to know, we're going to stick together, we're going to get what we want, or we're going to die together."

The prisoners informed me that there were over 200 inmates doing life sentences at Attica. Almost all of them are Black and Puerto Rican. Eighty-five per cent of the prison population at Attica is Black and Puerto Rican; there are no Black or Puerto Rican guards, doctors, or officials. They spoke of the slave labor conditions — how they had to get up at 6:00 a.m. and be in the sheet metal workshops by 8:00; and then take lunch and a short period in the yard, then back to work again. For this they received 25 cents per hour!!

Many of the Latin brothers who spoke to me said that when they went to the medical authorities for treatment the doctor couldn't speak Spanish. One racist doctor refused to treat a Puerto Rican brother,

demand to be accepted as equals." It is signed, Brother Che, Palante.

I got hundreds of notes like this one, written to the prisoners' families, telling of the prison horrors and explaining why the rebellion was necessary. Many asked me to contact their relatives to tell them that their loved ones inside were OK. Today I do not know how many of these beautiful brothers are dead or alive.

After returning from the liberated cellblock, we proceeded to an area in the yard and sat on the ground and started to talk politics. They wanted to know about the struggle on the outside; they wanted to know about all the progressive political organizations, especially in their communities, and of course about the PSC; they wanted to know about the international situation, about the war in Vietnam; they wanted to know what the workers are doing, particularly about the wage freeze; and they of course wanted to know what were the possibilities of the masses moving to help them.

NO REAL NEGOTIATIONS WENT ON

WW: What was the role of the so-called negotiating committee?

Tom: Personally, let me say that the PSC was there to give voice to the demands of the brothers. The so-called committee was simply a screen that the authorities used to hide behind, giving them time to build up forces for the massacre. At no time did the authorities directly negotiate with the inmate population. At no time was there any indication that the authorities were willing to give in one-half inch on any substantive demands. The committee was used to give a false impression to the public that actual negotiations were going on while that was really not the case.

On Saturday afternoon, members of the left block of the committee — which was composed of

Prisoners' relatives tell their story

"They pointed guns at us..."

Monday evening, just a few hours after the ruthless slaughter of prisoners at Attica, WORKERS WORLD spoke with four women who had just returned from the scene. Olga, Janie, and Idalia are three Puerto Rican women whose brother has been at Attica Prison only about a month. Carmene is a Black woman. Her husband has been at Attica since last June. All four women made the trip to the prison with members of the Prisoners Solidarity Committee.

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Olga explained that when her brother was transferred to Attica, the family found out about it purely by accident. "The family was not notified. My brother was not notified beforehand. It was by pure coincidence or luck that his wife went to visit him on the day of the transfer. This is the way she found out. They were both very upset and angry but they could do nothing about it."

Carmene had been to see her husband two weeks previously. At that time she had asked him about the conditions at Attica. "I asked him was it any better than Auburn (the prison he had been transferred from—ed.) and he said no—if you know the conditions at Auburn—the same conditions they have there are the conditions at Attica. It's no better." Carmene also mentioned

that while at Auburn her husband had had his life threatened by one of the guards and had been put in solitary.

INHUMANITY CAUSED REBELLION

We asked Janie what she thought caused the rebellion. "The inhumanity there. When I went to see him, you come all the way from New York City and all they give you is fifteen minutes. First, they weren't even going to let me in, claiming that I wasn't his sister. Finally, after hours of waiting, they let me see him. I was with him for fifteen minutes. By the way, they take finger prints of every finger and your palms. They put you through a machine to check for metal.

"My brother was furious about the harassment we had received. We asked him about the conditions. He said that the other prison had been bad, but this one was worse. He said it was like a concentration camp. He couldn't even get his mail. If a prisoner doesn't have relatives to send him money so he can buy food at the commissary, he is forced to eat scraps. All they give you at this prison are things like flour and powdered milk which you have to prepare yourself.

"When the fifteen minutes were over the guard came over and told us to leave. My sister and I got up. My brother was holding my hand and telling me to be careful going back home. The guard came over again and said, 'Do I have to repeat myself?' My brother got red. You could see the blood in his face. When he started to walk out, the guard told him to report to, I don't know where, but it was clear they were going to scold him."

RELATIVES BARRED FROM ATTICA

Upon reaching Attica at 4:30 Saturday morning, the women immediately went to the prison. "We found the road blocked. At first they thought we were inquiring about the guard hostages and they were very helpful. They had lists and everything. When they found out our brother was a prisoner, they changed their minds altogether. They told us to get in our car and get out."

"We encountered threats and provocations at every turn," Janie said. "The guards were very hostile. At one point they pointed their shotguns at us and said, 'Now we told you to get in that car and get out of here or do you want to get killed?' This happened on two occasions. Each time they pointed their guns at us. They also said, at another point, 'Didn't they tell you on the other side, we don't want you here!' At the same time, guards' wives were passing freely in and out of the prison."

"I can only imagine what goes on inside if we who are supposed to be free out here get such abusive treatment. What the hell is going on inside? The minute I was walking up the road I told myself, this is like a camouflaged concentration camp."

"Sunday night they issued an 8 p.m. curfew. We were coming down a dirt road. There was a patrol car there with a couple of state troopers. All of a sudden, along came a station wagon with six or seven men inside wearing white sheets over their heads with holes for the eyes. I told my sister they must be Ku Klux Klan members. She said they were probably just kids trying to scare us. But they stopped and talked with the troopers and then they passed right through on the same road that was supposed to be blocked to everyone."

We asked Idalia how she felt about the situation. "I don't want to talk about it," she replied in Spanish. "The way I feel about it is that it was a massacre, what they did to the prisoners."

At the time of this interview, the women had received no word concerning their loved ones. To read the bourgeois press, or listen to the fascist statements of the officials, one would get the impression that prisoners had no relatives, or that their relatives had no feelings. The pigs have another guess coming. The profound sorrow that the relatives and friends of the massacred prisoners feel today only suggests the boiling anger soon to come. That anger will demand justice and retribution for the crimes being perpetrated against the flesh and blood of the people.



CARMENE

Attica

Town youth have dialogue with PSC

ATTICA—One aspect of the courageous struggle waged by the Attica prisoners was its effect on the consciousness of people all over. The young people of the town of Attica, some of them the children of guards held by the prisoners, gathered by the roadblocks on Sunday afternoon where members of the Prisoners Solidarity Committee and prisoners' families maintained a constant vigil of support for the courageous men of cellblock D.

They came out of curiosity, mostly. But they stayed and talked when the prisoners' supporters began explaining the prison issue and connections between Rocky's prisons, Rocky's wars in Viet Nam and the

Middle East, and Rocky's taxes. Raised in a small town, by racist parents, these young people had many distorted ideas, especially about the prisoners.

But after a couple of hours of careful explanation and discussion, many began to agree, some thanking us for taking the time to tell them "what it's all about."

This one incident, multiplied many times over, is part of the whole process of change the prisoners "inside" and those of us on the outside are all working for. They didn't gain physical freedom at Attica this year, but some day they will. By then there'll be many more people supporting the prisoners, and that day, WE'LL WIN.

Rochester

"Total amnesty"

ROCHESTER, N.Y., Sept. 13—A demonstration called today by the Rochester Prisoners Solidarity Committee to protest the massacre of prisoners at Attica State Prison drew the participation of 100 people, including 15 relatives of Attica prisoners.

Starting at 4:30 p.m., the PSC demonstration was held at a busy intersection in downtown Rochester, and picked up the support of 40 bystanders. "Oswald — tool of Rockefeller's rule!" chanted the demonstrators, frequently chanting allusions to the heroic struggles of the Jackson brothers. Over 4000 leaflets condemning the massacre were distributed throughout the Rochester area, and local radio and TV stations covered the demonstra-

tors as they carried banners saying "End slave labor at Attica!" and "Total amnesty for Attica prisoners!"

Cleveland

"Jail

Rockefeller"

CLEVELAND, Ohio, Sept. 13—The rush hour of busy downtown Cleveland had its routine broken today by a militant demonstration of the Prisoners Solidarity Committee protesting the Attica massacre. Carrying signs reading "Avenge Attica massacre" and "Jail the rich; Free the poor," about 20 people raised the fact that 85 per cent of the inmates in the country are Black and Third World, and almost all are poor. Undaunted by pouring rain, the demonstrators also carried a large banner reading, "Jail Rockefeller; Free Attica prisoners!"

Protests over massacre erupt in many cities

New York

700 hit

Rocky's office

NEW YORK, Sept. 13—Over 700 people gathered outside the offices of Nelson Rockefeller here late this afternoon to protest the fascist massacre earlier in the day at Attica State Prison.

The thoughts of the crowd were clear in the many signs and banners and the shouts of "Rockefeller! Murderer! Tear Down the Jails!" After an hour of continuing police attempts to limit the size of the demonstration by surrounding it with barricades, the crowd surged out onto 55th Street and then onto Sixth Avenue, marching against the traffic. The police were left in the dust as the march moved south, bringing traffic to a halt as homeward-bound workers read our banners and took leaflets explaining the action.

At 42nd Street the demonstration swung east to Grand Central Station where, inside the huge central area, Fred Goldstein of Workers World Party addressed the crowd of demonstrators and workers. "The demands of the prisoners show the truth of prison conditions. We have to bring these facts to the people. When they know the truth about the horrible conditions that exist, they will rise up and tear the prisons down!"

Goldstein announced a public meeting on the Attica events to be held in New York on September 17. The featured speaker will be Tom Soto, a member of the Prisoners Solidarity Committee who was inside Attica during the events as an invited guest of the prisoners. He will report on what really happened at the prison.

Goldstein concluded by reminding the crowd of the class character of the Attica struggle. "Rockefeller the billionaire says that amnesty for the prisoners would have undermined the American way of life. But he really means that it would undermine his way of life. His freedom to rob the poor. He's the outside agitator. It was his class that built the prisons as part of their system to protect their wealth and power. Brothers Out of Attica! Rockefeller in!"



Demonstration in New York City.

Buffalo

Cops club protesters

Sept. 14 -- In response to the brutal murders Rockefeller, Oswald & Co. committed Monday at Attica Concentration Camp, a rally and demonstration were called in downtown Buffalo. The Prisoners Solidarity Committee of YAWF issued a leaflet headlined "Hands Off the Attica Prisoners" and calling for the removal of all troops from Attica. Representatives from Black groups, B.R.A.G. and B.U.I.L.D., a relative of one of the prisoners, attorney William Kunstler, and Tom Soto, from the National Staff of the Prisoners Solidarity Committee, all spoke. Their speeches reflected justified contempt for the actions of the prison administrators against the Attica prisoners.

The rally attracted 300 people, and many more on-lookers. But with the obvious interest shown by the people passing by, the Buffalo police got increasingly up-tight. They attacked the rally, clubbing indiscriminately, and beating people to the ground. Fifteen people were arrested and the rally was completely broken up by the riot-gearred police and their dogs.



Demonstration in Buffalo.

The massacre at Attica was a clear escalation of the ruling class's domestic war against the working, poor, and oppressed people. Their attempt in Buffalo Monday to smash any opposition to their genocidal policies is a clear indication of just how little freedom there really is in the U.S.

FREE THE ATTICA PRISONERS
TEAR THE PRISONS DOWN

Wilmington

Beatings at Smyrna

WILMINGTON, Sept. 14—The Prisoners Solidarity Committee picketed the Wilmington office of Governor Peterson today to protest the barbaric massacre of 30 prisoners at Attica Prison, calling for the indictment of Governor Rockefeller, and to expose the brutal beatings administered to the rebellious prisoners of Delaware's own concentration camp Smyrna Prison.

"Support the struggle for liberation at Smyrna and Attica," read the PSC banner, connecting the two prison struggles as part of one struggle for the national liberation of oppressed minorities.

After the Smyrna rebellion, prison guards systematically brutalized prisoners held in the maximum security section. One of the prisoners had every bone in his hands broken so that they were three times their normal size. Another was beaten unconscious three times and left with a hole in the back of his head. All beaten prisoners were denied medical care. The screams of the victims were so loud that some of the prisoners in the minimum security section became sick in anguish.

The Prisoners Solidarity Committee has been contacted and given access to pictures of beaten prisoners and names of guards who led the brutal assault. The PSC

intends to publish the names of the guards with the photographs in a special four-page supplement of SEIZE THE TOWN on prisons with special emphasis on Attica and Smyrna. PSC is also planning a demonstration on September 18, Rodney Square, Wilmington, in support of the Attica and Smyrna prisoners. The Committee is also planning a public forum that night in Wilmington.

Detroit

PSC rallies at county jail

DETROIT, Sept. 14— "Attica, Wayne, both the same! Racist hacks are to blame!" resounded against the walls of Wayne County Jail here today as 70 demonstrators picketed against the campaign of the rich ruling class of billionaire Rockefeller to crush the prisoners' growing movement across the country.

Yesterday, over one hundred shotgun-armed police with fire trucks stood and waited to attack prisoners outside Wayne Jail as tensions in the jail grew following news of the Attica massacre. Inside, nervous prison guards launched a shakedown search of every prisoner, exposing the prison officials' fear of a prisoners' uprising at Wayne.

As the Prisoners Solidarity Committee's demonstration approached the jail today, county police attempted to turn them back. The demonstrators, however, defied the police and set up a picket line which swelled to about 60 people within a few minutes.

As the strength of the picket line grew, the demonstrators marched around the entire jail with chants of "Average Attica Prisoners! Tear the walls down!" A member of the PSC closed with a short statement about the committee and the need to return again and again so that "Wayne County Jail, better start shaking; Prisoner power is in the making!"

FOR THESE DEMANDS THEY DIED

Following is the list of demands issued by the rebelling Attica prisoners.

We, the men of Attica Prison, have been committed to the New York State Department of Corrections by the people of society for the purpose of correcting what has been deemed as social errors in behavior. Errors which have classified us as socially unacceptable until re-programmed with new values and more thorough understanding as to our value and responsibilities as members of the outside community. The Attica Prison program in its structure and conditions have been enslaved on the pages of this Manifesto of Demands with the blood, sweat, and tears of the inmates of this prison.

The programs which we are submitted to under the facade of rehabilitation are relative to the ancient stupidity of pouring water on a drowning man, inasmuch as we are treated for our hostilities by our program administrators with their hostility as medication.

In our efforts to comprehend on a feeling level an existence contrary to violence, we are confronted by our captors with what is fair and just, we are victimized by the exploitation and the denial of the celebrated due process of law.

In our peaceful efforts to assemble in dissent as provided under this nation's U.S. Constitution, we are in turn murdered, brutalized, and framed on various criminal charges because we seek the rights and privileges of all American People.

In our efforts to intellectually expand in keeping with the outside world, through all categories of news media, we are systematically restricted and punitively remanded to isolation status when we insist on our human rights to the wisdom of awareness.

MANIFESTO OF DEMANDS

1. We Demand the constitutional rights of legal representation at the time of all parole board hearings and the protection from the procedures of the parole authorities whereby they permit no procedural safeguards such as an attorney for cross-examination of witnesses, witnesses in behalf of the parolee, at parole revocation hearings.

2. We Demand a change in medical staff and medical policy and procedure. The Attica Prison hospital is totally inadequate, understaffed, and prejudiced in the treatment of inmates. There are numerous "mistakes" made many times; improper and erroneous medication is given by untrained personnel. We also demand periodical check-ups on all prisoners and sufficient licensed practitioners 24 hours a day instead of inmates' help that is used now.

3. We Demand adequate visiting conditions and facilities for the inmate and families of Attica prisoners. The visiting facilities at the prison are such as to preclude adequate visiting for inmates and their families.

4. We Demand an end to the segregation of prisoners from the mainline population because of their political beliefs. Some of the men in segregation units are confined there solely for political reasons and their segregation from other inmates is indefinite.

5. We Demand an end to the persecution and punishment of prisoners who practice the Constitutional Right of peaceful dissent. Prisoners at Attica and other New York prisons cannot be compelled to work as these prisons were built for the purpose of housing prisoners and there is no mention as to the prisoners being required to work on prison jobs in order to remain in the mainline population and/or be considered for release. Many prisoners believe their labor power is being exploited in order for the state to increase its economic power and to continue to expand its correctional industries (which are million-dollar complexes), yet do not develop working skills acceptable for employment in the outside society, and which do not pay the prisoner more than an average of forty cents a day. Most prisoners never make more than fifty cents a



day. Prisoners who refuse to work for the outrageous scale, or who strike, are punished and segregated without the access to the privileges shared by those who work; this is class legislation, class division, and creates hostilities within the prison.

6. We Demand an end to political persecution, racial persecution, and the denial of prisoner's rights to subscribe to political papers, books or any other educational and current media chronicles that are forwarded through the U.S. Mail.

7. We Demand that industries be allowed to enter the institutions and employ inmates to work eight hours a day and fit into the category of workers for scale wages. The working conditions in prisons do not develop working incentives parallel to the many jobs in the outside society, and a paroled prisoner faces many contradictions of the job that add to his difficulty in adjusting. Those industries outside who desire to enter prisons should be allowed to enter for the purpose of employment placement.

8. We Demand that inmates be granted the right to join or form labor unions.

9. We Demand that inmates be granted the right to support their own families; at present, thousands of welfare recipients have to divide their checks to support their imprisoned relatives, who without the outside support, cannot even buy toilet articles or food. Men working on scale wages could support themselves and families while in prison.

10. We Demand that correctional officers be prosecuted as a matter of law for any act of cruel and unusual punishment where it is not a matter of life and death.

11. We Demand that all institutions using inmate labor be made to conform with the state and federal minimum wage laws.

12. We Demand an end to the escalating practice of physical brutality being perpetrated upon the inmates of New York State prisons.

13. We Demand the appointment of three lawyers from the New York State Bar Association to full-time positions for the provision of legal assistance to inmates seeking post-conviction relief, and to act as a liaison between the administration and inmates for bringing inmates' complaints to the attention of the administration.

14. We Demand the updating of industry working conditions to the standards provided for under New York State law.

15. We Demand the establishment of inmate worker's insurance plan to provide compensation for work-related accidents.

16. We Demand the establishment of unionized vocational training programs comparable to that of the Federal Prison System which provides for union instructions, union pay scales, and union membership upon completion of the vocational training course.

17. We Demand annual accounting of the Inmates Recreational Fund and formulation of an inmate committee to give inmates a voice as to how such funds are used.

18. We Demand that the present Parole Board appointed by the Governor be eradicated and replaced by the parole board elected by popular vote of the people. In a world where many crimes are punished by indeterminate sentences and where authority acts within secrecy and within vast discretion and given heavy weight to accusations by prison employees against inmates, inmates feel trapped unless they are willing to abandon their desire to be independent men.

19. We Demand that the state legislature create a full-time salaried board of overseers for the State Prisons. The board would be responsible for evaluating allegations made by inmates, their families, friends and lawyers against employers charged with acting inhumanely, illegally or unreasonably. The board should include people nominated by a psychological or psychiatric association, by the State Bar Association or by the Civil Liberties Union and by groups of concerned involved laymen.

(continued on PSC 3)