

MASSACRE AT ATTICA



Nixon, Rockefeller and Oswald wanted a peaceful solution.

One of the most brutal atrocities of the Nixon-Rockefeller Regime during this past year in the U.S. was, of course, the Massacre at Attica State Prison, in Attica, New York, on September 13, 1971. People around the world recoiled in shock and anger at this wholesale slaughter of 42 prisoners and guards and the wounding of countless others by Nixon-Rockefeller directed State Troops.

Afterward, the State tried to hide its murderous acts by exhuming the bodies of the murdered guards. This was done in hopes of placing the blame on other victims - the prisoners. Even this old divide-and-conquer tactic failed. The families of the slain guards knew that the same bullets that had riddled the bodies of the prisoners had taken the lives of the guards. The State also tried to hide the fact that Bobby Seale, Chairman of the Black Panther Party, had tried to carry out the negotiations in behalf of the prisoners and that he had been barred from re-entering the prison on the very day of the Massacre. In a People's Tribunal in October, the People exposed the facts about this, as well as other lies the state had told. The State even employed strong-arm tactics in attempts to make all those that were involved conform to the State's story. The State failed, there, too, however. People saw through the smokescreen and they recognized the prisoners' rightful and peaceful bid for freedom.

The State's violence at Attica awakened many people. For many, more clearly than ever before, the barbarous cruelty, the injustice of the American Prison System was revealed. Along with this new insight came a rise in the level of consciousness and concern among the people in the community for all prisoners. The spirit and the idea of Freedom for All was not quelled at Attica. If anything, it sparked a larger movement, a stronger resolve on the part of the people and a more concentrated effort to transform this inhuman system into one where bars and chains, economic slavery and racism are merely part of the history of a dark past.

In the September 18, 1971, issue of the Black Panther Intercommunal News Service, the following article was printed. Perhaps a review of these events would give us a frame of reference for the continuation and progression of our struggle:

They say violence erupted on Thursday, September 9th, at Attica State Prison in New York, when nearly 2,000 men wrested control of the facility from the hands of State officials and prison administrators. With this as a starting point and basis for "action", Governor Nelson Rockefeller of New York and U.S. President Richard M. Nixon ordered and had implemented the outright murder, the massacre of at least 50 persons, four days later. Violence

did not erupt at Attica on September 9th. The brutal beatings, the isolations cells, the secret murders, the overall inhumane conditions perpetrated by the prison administration, the State and Federal governments has existed for some time. For one group of men - the State - to claim the right to kill or otherwise destroy the lives of other men - the inmates - is certainly violence in the extreme.



"We are MEN. We are not beasts."

The seizure of the Attica State prison by those it held by force, by the inmates there, was a human response to the violence and suffering the brothers had long endured. When in a quick and organized, united move those brothers declared in action that they would take authority over their lives, they stated that by capturing control of the prison and arresting approximately 38 of the institution's guards, they wished to make it clear that they no longer wished to be confined like animals, nor treated like animals. Their aim was not to control the prison to the degree where they would confine others, confine those who had dealt them such terrible blows, but to simply go free, live like human beings, outside the prison walls - and for those who would, to even leave the country to go to one where they could be treated and respond to others as human beings. Their goal was not to take any lives, but to save lives - their own. The capturing of guards was a move to exchange lives - theirs for the guards' - for they presumed that America placed value on human lives - especially when those lives were of people who upheld and enforced the very laws which are the foundation of the "Democracy".

Their declaration made all of this distinctly clear: "The entire incident that has erupted here at Attica is not a result of the dastardly bushwhacking of the two prisoners on September 8, 1971, but of the unmitigated oppression wrought by the racist administrative network of this prison throughout the years.

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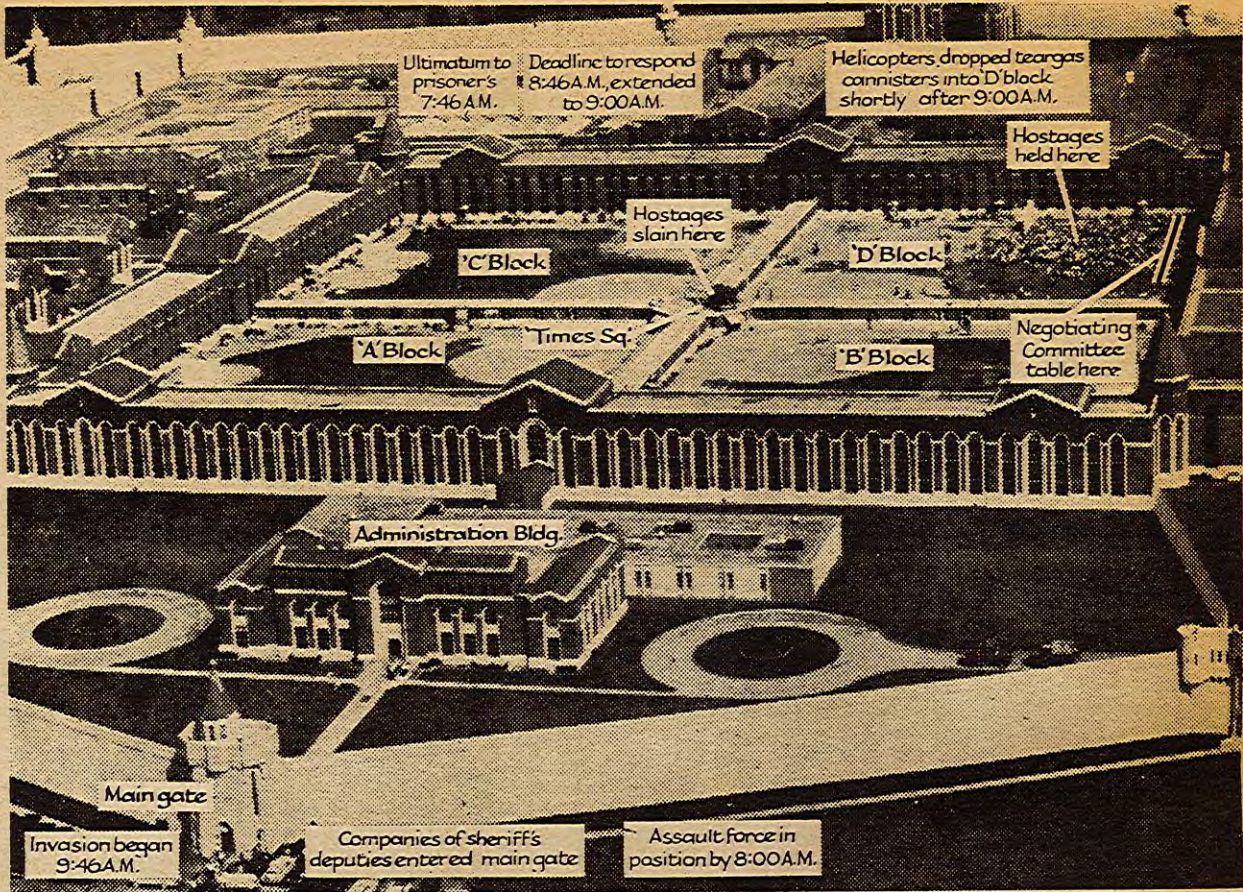
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"We are MEN. We are not beasts and we do not intend to be beaten or driven as such. We will not compromise on any terms, except those terms that are agreeable to us.

"We want complete amnesty - freedom from all or any physical, mental or legal reprisals. We want - now - speedy and safe transportation out of confinement to a non-imperialistic country. We demand that the federal government intervene so that we will be under direct federal jurisdiction. We want the government and the judiciary, namely Constance B. Motley, to guarantee that there will be no reprisals. And we want all facets of the media to articulate this."

During that first day, the brothers inside had taken complete control of the prison; but as armed police re-inforcements moved in, they were pushed back to be primarily concentrated in one cell Block - D. Later on in the day, a counter-attack was launched by the heroic inmates, who had only their hands and clubs; but this move was soon quelled by the submachine guns, rifles with telescopic sights and tear gas grenade launchers of police.

As things became more settled, the brothers began establishing a base of operation on the D-Block yard. Tents were set up for living quarters and the arrested guards were situated; also, an area was cleared for discussion and communication with news media and the group of outside negotiators for whom the inmates had called. When news of the uprising came to the Black Panther Party as well as a call from New York to have Huey P. Newton, Minister of Defense of the Black Panther Party, come to Attica as a key negotiator, the Central Committee of our Party issued the following statement: "The Central Headquarters of the Black Panther Party was contacted September 10, 1971, by the office of New York State Assemblyman, Arthur Eve, which delivered a message from 1,280 of our Brothers who are political prisoners at the Attica State Prison in Attica, New York. The message from the political prisoners is that Huey P. Newton, of the Black Panther Party, Servant of the People, must, in



"PRISON - WHERE IS THY VICTORY?"

fact, be a key negotiator in behalf of our incarcerated Brothers and their 27 demands for better prison conditions.

"The said prison guards, called hostages, have actually, in reality been placed under arrest by the 1,280 prisoners, who are rightfully redressing their grievances concerning the harassing, brutal and inhuman treatment to which they are constantly subjected.

"The New York State Prison Commissioner, the courts, and the federal and state governments' prosecutors have deliberately allowed the creation and maintenance of the oppressive and atrocious conditions to which our Attica prison Brothers are subjected. Also, the state has for too many years willfully and maliciously ignored the legal and lawful requests and redresses of grievances from the prisoners.

"Some 35 prison guards are under arrest; and the state wants those arrested guards to be bailed out, on the promise of the courts and prison commissioner that there will be no reprisals if the arrested guards are released.

"The U.S. District court order, however, that there will be no reprisals, is quite fallacious and irrelevant on its face, when the state commissioner, Russell Oswald, adds that our prison Brothers will face other criminal charges. To face more criminal charges means, in fact, nothing else other than out-right reprisals against our incarcerated Brothers. The state, the commissioner (Russell G. Oswald), the courts and prosecutors are acting in extreme bad faith by not going forth and obtaining an official New York State and court-ordered amnesty; Amnesty that there will be no reprisals whatsoever, in the form of criminal

charges or otherwise. This is the first thing that must be done to start negotiations of the prisoners' 27 demands. This is the only bail the arrested guards can have, from the analysis of the Black Panther Party.

"The Attica Prison Move, composed of political prisoners and the lives of 35 arrested police guards in the hands of the prisoners, is a tactical move towards going forward to show the world's community people how to begin to end oppression and wretched, unjust prison incarceration."

The list of demands, summarily, on a general basis, requesting decent prison conditions, was read, with the chief demand being emphasized repeatedly. Essentially, the brothers wanted freedom, not only for themselves, but really all political prisoners; particularly they cried the demand to free David Hilliard - Chief of Staff of the Black Panther Party - free Romaine "Chip" Fitzgerald, Angela Davis, Ruchell Magee, the remaining Soledad Brothers. They no longer wished to be animalistically confined; they wanted freedom - immediately. In exchange for their freedom, they made it clear, they would release the arrested guards. The guards held by them were in no danger as long as negotiating could continue, to culminate in the satisfaction of the brothers. This was simply a move made to get a ticket to ride to the outside. The treatment of the guards, completely contradictory to Russell Oswald's (State Prison Correctional Commissioner) lies about the beastly actions of the brothers in regard to treatment of the guards, was human and kind. The guards themselves stated this - then, as now, after the fact, when no present "threat" exists.

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CHAIRMAN BOBBY SEALE

After a brief first visit, he was never allowed in again.

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One guard, Phillip Watkins, who came out after the prison was re-captured by attack, said that he was given cigarettes when there were few, medical attention when needed, and, "When they ate hot meals, we had hot meals; when they had sandwiches, so did we; we had mattresses - but they didn't." The brothers were preserving, protecting life, even under the unreasonable circumstances of Oswald's instructed refusal to guarantee no reprisals or to talk of amnesty, or freedom from confinement. The brothers even implored the State, the government of the country to consider all the lives - of both inmates and guards. On September 11th, the brothers issued this statement in this regard: "We, the People, hereby present to the Administration officials of Attica Correctional Facility: That we are trying to be and act humane to the officers, as best we can under the existing, unmitigating circumstances. We have sent you four (4) of your officers out to the hospital for medical attention.

"Henceforth, we demand that you allow a doctor to enter this prison to attend to the medical needs of both the officers and inmates. If it is found that it is necessary to remove an officer for medical reasons, we demand a healthy officer in return."

Early on Saturday evening (September 11th), at the brothers' request, Chairman Bobby Seale arrived at the prison, representing the Central Committee of the Black Panther Party. After a short and overwhelmingly warm meeting with the brothers, he left the prison with the promise he would return after consultation with the Party Central Committee regarding the negotiative guidance the Party could offer. The next morning, Chairman Bobby was "greeted" at the prison gate by Oswald, who demanded the Chairman discuss with him his agreements with the brothers. He demanded and tried to invoke the Chairman's agreement that the Party would compromise, or otherwise betray the brothers. When Chairman Bobby emphatically stated he would compromise neither their demands, nor the lives of the beautiful brothers inside and repeatedly reminded Oswald that the inmates had promised no harm would come to the guards until the negotiating reached an impasse - which was all pending his return - Oswald absolutely denied the Chairman re-entry to the prison.

The lives of the inmates was certainly of no concern to Oswald and his chieftains, Rockefeller and Nixon; but as would later shock most Americans, neither were the lives of the guards, who were gunned down, like the inmates, by police bullets. The guards themselves, along with the inmates, implored the State to use discretion and to listen to the inmates' reasonable demands, or that, in the words of

one guard, "My Lai was only one-hundred-or-so-odd men; we're going to end up with 1,500 men (dead) here, if things don't go right." Another guard inside, one day before the vicious police attack, spoke words expressing the feelings of the other guards inside. Sergeant Edward T. Cunningham, a 52-year old WW II Army Sgt. with a purple heart and bronze star, said amnesty was the only salvation: "Anything short of this is just as good as dropping dead." The next day, he too was murdered by police bullets. That was the answer the State gave him for his understanding plea.

While the vast majority of people were more concerned with saving life than face, Nelson Rockefeller and Richard Nixon and Oswald plotted the vicious course that would leave over 50 dead at Attica. When importuned that he be present to aid in a peaceful settlement of the issues, Rockefeller refused to come, saying, "I am in full support of the Commissioner's actions and I will continue to help, in direct communication with him, in his untiring efforts to achieve a 'peaceful' solution."

And, while human beings were joining together in response to the human cries of the inmates, Nixon was consulting with Rockefeller, with Oswald, and so on, delivering the death orders. As well as guards and inmates coming to understand something of the nature of each other, the brothers inside were breaking all the treacherously divisionary, phoney barriers that have separated races of people in America for so long, in common understanding of the State's oppression and the right of all human beings to be free. One of the white inmates, Blease Montgomery, born and raised in the small, Southern town of Hamlet, North Carolina, spoke clearly to this, as, in his native drawl he said, "Man, there's people in here we treated like dogs down home...but, I want everyone to know we gon' stick together, we gon' get what we want, or we gon' die together...I've learned so much that if I get out of this, I want a plane ticket out of this country."

The horrendous end to this magnificent strike for freedom and human dignity came on September 13, 1971, with police helicopters firing tear gas onto the yard full of people, and then the invasion of the 1,700 police troops, armed with the machine guns, the rifles and the pistols. No person on the yard was safe from the invaders. Oswald had lied - he had not kept his promise of more time to discuss his ultimatum to those inside to restore "order" and to give up the "hostages"; and he

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OSWALD: "My main concern was with the safety of the hostages..."; and later, "...I'd do it again."



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lied again - when he said the very reason he carried out his instruction to attack was because the brothers inside had been seen, by helicopter, slitting the throats of eight guards (later that figure was changed by Oswald's assistant, Houlihan, to two guards).

But the whitewash this time was unsuccessful. For although the people, particularly Black people who know the lying, vicious, racist nature of the power structure, did not believe Rockefeller's and Oswald's lies, the cold and concrete evidence of murder, of the massacre came in the corner's report. State officials didn't have to lie about the brothers in there; they felt no one would care. They admitted readily to those murders. But when Monroe County (New York) Medical Examiner, John F. Edland, gave his report regarding the condition of the bodies of the guards, the lies and the fact of out-right murder on the part of the State could not be denied. Dr. Edland, at a press conference, told the American people that no guard's throat had been slit, "They all died of gunshot wounds." Many could not believe it, until he elaborated even further: Of the condition of the guards' bodies, he said, "Some were shot once, some as many as five, ten, twelve times... with two types of missiles, buckshot and large calibre missiles." He went on and contradicted Houlihan's suggestion, after the first lie was exposed,

that possibly the inmates' zip guns could have been used to kill the guards, and said emphatically, "No". In answer to the original statement that the guards were killed prior to the attack and that the rigor mortis which had set into their bodies proved this, Dr. Edland stated, "All died yesterday morning (September 13th)." Regarding a report of castration of one inmate (said to indicate the inmates had acted like the



DR. JOHN F. EDLAND: "I am my own man. I call things as I see them."

U.S. Army animals who massacred the people of My Lai), Edland said, "There is no evidence of that." In summary, as though responding to the potential threats he may receive from the State for his disclosures, Dr. Edland stated: "I am my own man and I call things as I see them. All I know is I have 27 bodies in my office which is more than I ever want to see again in one day...I'm used to not finding what people tell me I will find."

Let us briefly speak, then, of what our beautiful brothers incarcerated at the Attica State Prison have dramatically demonstrated. Their heroic move, singly, brought into a cold and harsh light the bitter reality that is America. It is them we must praise. They sealed a bond of love among many who otherwise may have never known each other. Black people across the U.S. and oppressed people in the many communities of the world shall not ask why, nor seek to find underlying secrets that may, through lengthy investigation and discussion, reveal what "really" took place at Attica on September 13th. We shall leave that to the liberal intellectuals, the more refined racists, the undercover fascists, the defenders of the bourgeoisie, the oppressors themselves to discuss and to dissect. Their stories shall be junked in our history. We shall say and know that a massacre occurred at Attica. A massacre of our heroic brothers, whose actions of supreme courage on those few days made men of us all. We shall not forget. We shall bury them, but not forget. For their individual lives, the men at Attica, and certainly their goals were so much a part of our lives, our very existence that it was our blood that was painfully shed; so much a part of us all that no mother or father or sister or brother of any of the men at Attica shall know a pain as great as ours. But, we will not be defeated - we are not defeated. We will surely win. For, their deaths were victories, because they died with glory and dignity - as men. There will be songs and poems and writings and books and words said for the men at Attica. But, in their names, and the thousands before them, and the painfully countless number that shall surely follow, there shall be People's Victory.

As for now, in the unknown names of our fallen soldiers at Attica, we re-dedicate ourselves, our lives, reaffirm our commitment to each other to the long and arduous struggle that shall lead us to that glorious victory.

In the words of one of our beautiful brothers, when asked his name, let each of us say, "I am Attica- I am all of us."

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE

KNOW YOUR ENEMIES KNOW YOUR FRIENDS



HUEY P. NEWTON, SERVANT OF THE PEOPLE, WITH PREMIER CHOU EN-LAI IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

During the negotiations at Attica (in the days prior to the Massacre), the Black Panther Party was represented by Chairman Bobby Seale (at the prisoners' request).

When the Brothers at Attica made their peaceful bid for freedom, they were met with the guns and violent aggression of the Nixon-Rockefeller Regime. This has been the typical response of this regime to all hu-

man, peace-loving and non-aggressive peoples.

Therefore, during October, a visit to the People's Republic of China was made by Huey P. Newton, leader of the Black Panther Party and Servant of the People, along with Elaine Brown, Minister of Information of the Black Panther Party, and Comrade Robert Bay, in which the opportunity was taken to present the following petition to the Chinese People, in behalf of the oppressed peoples of the rest of the world:

SO LET IT BE HEARD:

A short time ago, the prisoners at Attica requested the Black Panther Party to negotiate with Nixon, Rockefeller and Oswald for their freedom. The Black Panther Party at this time asks Chairman Mao Tsetung of the People's Republic of China to negotiate with Prison Warden Nixon for the freedom of the oppressed peoples of the world.

We recognize that the criminal activities of trigger-happy Nixon show clearly that he has no respect for peaceful negotiation, when the victim is divided and weak. He not only killed the prisoners at Attica, but he also murdered his exploited workers, the prison guards. Although most of the prisoners at Attica are Black and all the guards are white, Nixon killed regardless of color, because they were all victims. When the oppressed people of the world ask for

negotiation, such as the Vietnamese people, Prison Warden Nixon shows again he has no respect for the people nor his agents, the U.S. Military. HE LEAVES NO ALTERNATIVE BUT VIOLENT, ARMED RESISTANCE. He is responsible for the murder of Vietnamese people and the deaths of the U.S. soldiers. Both the Vietnamese People and the U.S. soldiers are victims of the reactionary Nixon regime. This is why we approached Chairman Mao Tsetung, because we know of his peace- and freedom-loving nature. There can be no peace without freedom.

We are asking all the agents of Prison Warden Nixon (whom he despises) to join forces with the victims of the world: The U.S. soldiers to join forces with the victimized Vietnamese People; the guards and the families of the deceased guards at Attica and the

guards of the State prisons across the U.S. to join forces with the victimized inmates.

It is clear that Mr. Nixon is trigger-happy and could trigger off World War III. And because we knew of his impending visit to the People's Republic of China, we asked the Chinese People to receive us first, so that we might ask the peace- and freedom - loving Chairman Mao Tsetung to be the chief negotiator to Mr. Nixon for the peace and freedom of the oppressed peoples of the world. And this is why we ask for unity of all the victims against the common enemy, the Nixon - Rockefeller regime.

SO LET IT BE DONE

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE