

**“WE HAVE THE SOLUTION.
THE SOLUTION IS UNITY.”**

...A Brother from D yard



ATTICA: TWO YEARS LATER 1971—1973

"We are men. We are not beasts and we do not intend to be beaten or driven as such."

Elliot (L. D.) Barkley assassinated by the State of New York, September 13, 1971.

The village of Attica lies quietly in Wyoming County, New York, little more than a half-hour's drive from industrial Buffalo. It is an artificial village without a real life of its own, like the classic coal company towns of Kentucky and West Virginia; like the migrant farmers' camps in Florida and the valleys of California; for Attica is also a company town, whose existence

depends entirely upon the nearby "industry" which employs and provides the paychecks for its residents. For the village of Attica, survival of the citizenry comes through the imprisonment of 2,000 men confined at the Attica Correctional Facility.

And Attica has, like certain other villages and hamlets, come to repres-

ent for peoples of conscience the world over a name imbedded in history for its savagery and intolerable shame. Ludlow and Dearborn and Gastonia, Wounded Knee and Sand Creek, My Lai in South Vietnam and Simchon in North Korea and now Attica—unnoticeable points of geography, not to be found in an Atlas, but never to be forgotten.

Two years ago, on September 13, 1971, Governor Nelson Rockefeller set his State Police force against the unarmed prison population, without warning or clear ultimatum.



A year earlier, 500 inmates in the prison metal shop had gone on strike to protest intolerable living conditions, inedible food, 25-cents-a-day wages, five minute parole hearings, constant brutality and abuse, most especially racist abuse. The prisoners' strike negotiators were promised an audience with the warden to discuss their grievances. Instead they were beaten, forced to run a gauntlet of

guards armed with clubs. After the beating, they were transferred out of Attica. In July 1971, the prisoners tried again: 28 demands were submitted to Commissioner of Corrections Russell Oswald, together with a promise not to take action in support of the demands. Signatories to the demands were harassed and some placed in solitary confinement. The demands included adequate food,

water and shelter for all inmates; the application of minimum wage laws to prison labor; more fruit in the diet; religious freedom; an end to censorship of publications subscribed to by prisoners; modernization of the inmate education system, including the establishment of a Spanish-language library (one of every 10 inmates speaks Spanish as his first language); an end to approved lists for correspondents and visitors, and the like.

Prison authorities ignored the demands and nothing changed.

On September 9, 1971 the prisoners rose against their oppression, taking over the prison. Unarmed, they were soon driven back to D Yard, taking 38 guards as hostages to guarantee their own safety. For four days they controlled their own lives—sharing food, cigarettes and clothing, and providing medical treatment for those in need. The hostages, all white, were well fed, given double mattresses,

treated with humanity and guarded from attack by an all-Black group of inmates. The hostages testified to the humane treatment extended to them. No one was harmed—until the morning of September 13.

Commissioner Oswald who negotiated with the prisoners acknowledged that the changes requested in the 28 demands were "100 years overdue." Still he refused to grant

amnesty to the prisoners for their rebellion, and this refusal—seen by the inmates as a test of the authorities' "good faith"—caused negotiations to break down. If the demands were legitimate, as Oswald conceded, then prosecution of those making the demands was unreasonable. But the state, seeing its authority challenged, considered its prosecution prerogatives more important than all the humanity gathered in D Yard.

The assault force of State Police and prison guards gathered outside the prison on the morning of the 13th.

(Attica's prisoners are two-thirds non-white while all 500 guards are white.) Stirred up to racist fury by totally unfounded rumors of rapes and castrations of hostages inside, the troopers chanted "White Power," as they posed for the news media. They entered the prison armed with shotguns and buckshot, guaranteed to scatter fire without accuracy, and hunting rifles equipped with dum-dum bullets—outlawed for use in war by the Hague Declaration of 1899—designed to blow a foot-wide hole in the human body. Within five minutes 39 men, including 10 hostages, were killed and hundreds more wounded. Key leaders of the rebellion, seen alive after the carnage, were later found shot to death. Nelson Rockefeller, whose grandfather killed the Ludlow miners, had just con-

ducted the bloodiest one-day massacre in the United States since the Civil War (with the exception of the genocidal campaigns to eliminate the Indians in the 19th century). At the same time Richard Nixon took to the air waves to congratulate Rockefeller on his handling of the situation.

For the next several days inmates by the hundreds were systematically tortured with beatings, lit cigarettes and electric shock. Telegrams were sent to families of the dead, reading, "Your son is dead. Do you want the body?" Corpses were sent to families to which they did not belong—one final grim result of the callousness and racism of the officials. Over a hundred prisoners were placed in solitary confinement for more than a year.

The governor set up the usual "fact-

finding" commission, which we have come to expect after each government atrocity, as the authorities seek to absolve themselves of responsibility. Unexpected, however, were the reported findings of the special commission, chaired by Robert McKay. The McKay report found that the prisoner's life "meant daily degradation and humiliation," living in conditions "charged with racism," where "the promise of rehabilitation had become a cruel joke." Even the U.S. Court of Appeals found that . . . "The barbarous conduct . . . the beatings, physical abuse, torture, running of gauntlets, and similar cruelty was wholly beyond any force needed." The McKay Commission made its report public on September 13, 1972, one year after the massacre.

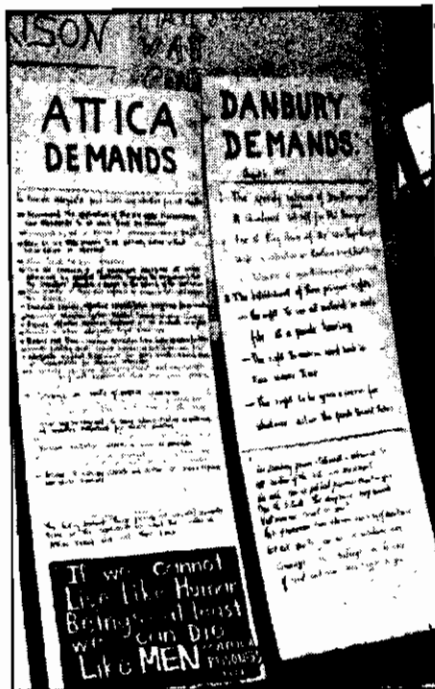
Now one more year has passed.

Not one of the 28 original prisoner demands, conceded by the state at the time as "100 years overdue," has been implemented. If anything, conditions at Attica have grown worse. There are now only two doctors to treat the entire prisoner population, and physi-

cal checkups are at best cursory, made as they are through a wire mesh partition. New gun towers and assault tunnels have been built, and the entire guard force has now been armed with M-16 rifles, capable of firing 800 rounds per minute.

Most alarming, however, are the results of the special Attica grand jury which, after 13 months of hearings, finally handed down 37 sealed indictments the week before Christmas last year.

Sixty Attica Brothers are charged with crimes ranging from murder to possession of a prison key.



Not one state official, trooper or guard has been indicted for a single infraction.

Penalties facing the inditees range from 34 concurrent life terms for some to as many as 589 years for others. The Wyoming County Grand Jury that handed down the indictments is made up of people who all live in and around the village of Attica and reflect its composition. They are all white, largely elderly, and 12 of its members have relatives or friends who work as guards in the prison or as State troopers; five had friends who were hostages in D Yard. The jury foreman runs the school bus company in Attica Village and claims many guards as friends.

While the grand jury was all white, the inditees represent the prison movement in its interracial solidarity: 48 are Black, three Latino, two Native Americans and seven white. Over \$3 million dollars in taxes have already

been spent by the prosecution and the trials won't even start until the end of the year. By contrast, not one penny has been spent towards implementing the 28 prisoner demands.

Attica, atrocious as it is, is not unique. Quite the contrary: it is a prototype of U.S. prisons, which serve as the end of the line for the millions of victims of deprivation and racial oppression who pass through the U.S. criminal justice system. The McKay Commission reports that U.S. prisons are now a \$6.5 billion a year industry. Over 1.6 million U.S. citizens are now in prison under conditions similar to those at Attica. That is more people than live in 16 member nations of the UN, and more than the populations of 16 of our states. The best guarantee that these hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens not be victims of another "Attica" is massive popular intervention into the present Attica case.

An International petition campaign for 500,000 signatures is now under way. The petition is directed to Governor Nelson Rockefeller and Attorney General Louis Lefkowitz, demanding that:



- All the indictments against the Attica Brothers be dismissed.
- The real criminals responsible for the September 13, 1971 murders be indicted.
- The 28 demands of the Attica prisoners be implemented without further delay.

WE URGE YOU TO JOIN THIS NATIONALLY COORDINATED PETITION DRIVE

"WE HAVE THE SOLUTION. THE SOLUTION IS UNITY."

- I would like more information on Attica defense.
- I would like to participate in the international petition drive. Please sendpetitions.
- I would like to contribute \$..... to the Attica defense.
- I would like information on other National Alliance campaigns against racist and political repression.
- I would like individual membership in the National Alliance. For my \$5.00 yearly fee, I will receive a membership card, newsletters, and information about activities.
- I would like to further the efforts of the National Alliance by contributing \$.....

Name.....Tel No.

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Organization

Trade Union.....

School

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