

RAMPAGE AT CAMP HILL

by
Tito

The following is my diary of the events that occurred at the Camp Hill State Prison in Pennsylvania in late October, 1989. Even though I maintained in my cell, I was able to capture most events that took place in the riot. It is based on my own trials and tribulations as an innocent human being who, along with many others, had nothing to do with the riot. We suffered nonetheless and continue to be treated harshly as I prepare to send this to CONVICTIONS on January 25, 1990. I withhold the true names of prisoners for their protection.

Photo Credit: Jeffrey Lane, Harrisburg, PA



October 25, Wednesday

2:30 p.m.

We A-ward prisoners have come from yardout and have been ordered to lock up immediately. At first, everything seems normal. But it strikes us strange that they order the tier runners to lock up too, when, by privilege, they can linger on the blocks. We wonder, "Is something going on?"

It is nice outside, 60 degrees and clear blue sky. My window is open. Suddenly I smell something burning, then a huge black cloud of smoke paints the sky. A-ward has figured out what's going on. Some can see from their windows prisoners out in the yard running with their personal belongings: footlockers, radios, T.V.s, bags, and some with hoods over their heads and clubs in their hands. They are trapped inside an area of modular housing units segregated by a huge fence, but not for long. They get through the gate by force and scatter all around the small yard. Most of the prisoners are from the modular trailers trying to avoid any participation in the riot.

Messages are being yelled to the prisoners in our block, "They burned down the furniture factory! They got a few hostages and they fucked up the commissary!"

Fire trucks, state police, all kinds of reinforcements arrive from the hills circling the prison. All the damage is on the big yard used by E, F, G, J and K wards. A, B, C and D wards use the small yard, now crowded with prisoners. E-ward is the only one not secured. Also some prisoners from C-ward and A-ward, caught in the action by being in the library or on their assigned jobs, are in the small yard.

Through the night the hours pass, seeming like the guards are waiting for something to happen from the prisoners and vice versa. Around midnight the hostages are released. Three or four guards and about 10 prisoners have been injured. A meeting is scheduled between the prisoners, the press and the warden for 3:30 p.m. tomorrow.

A-ward is still secured. One guard remains in the block all the time. I see him nervously pacing up and down the block, signalling on his walkie-talkie that everything is alright.

October 26, Thursday

11:00 a.m.

I stayed up till about 5 a.m. and must have then fallen asleep. Another guard has relieved A-ward.

The prisoners in the small yard were gathered and escorted back to the modular trailers and their wards.

Some kitchen workers were returned to A-ward. They said they stayed up all night locked in a secluded area.

3:00 p.m.

All the prisoners in A-ward tune in their radios and T.V.s. About 3:40 p.m. the news reports that five prisoner representatives met with Warden Freeman and other officials. The warden said the riot started over visiting privileges and the medical department. The prisoners stated the warden had taken away Family Day food privileges and we were limited to two sick-line signups per week. The warden stated the food privilege was taken away because of drugs being smuggled in the foods. He said more, but I can't hear because I have no T.V. or radio.

The air is filled with a strong sense of betrayal by the warden. The prisoners are angry, because a lot of the actual elements of the meeting were not revealed to the press: the food we get; the bad conditions of prison life; disrespect from the guards; overcrowding; poor medical care; infestations of mice, rats and roaches; and inadequate rehabilitation programs.

We've not been fed all day. We last ate yesterday at noon. Some prisoners are shouting for food, others are content with their own stock of commissary stuff. I have nothing.

About 6:30 p.m.

It's getting dark. We A-block prisoners hear voices and noises outside where the modular trailers are. Suddenly crowds of prisoners appear just like the first time, but now they seem more vicious. "They're rioting again! They're burning the trailers down, this whole fucking place is going up in flames!"

We hear they got into the keys-control room, and that the kitchen is being destroyed. One prisoner entered C-ward with a sledge hammer. I can see from my window that C-ward guys are freeing themselves from their cells. They are

Photo Credit: T.J. Tristan, Harrisburg, PA



running wild with hoods on their heads. A prisoner from outside yells, "They have eight hostages! A prisoner attempted to run a truck through the fence but didn't make it. The guards were shooting at them and one prisoner got hit!"

Twenty minutes later:

I see from my window that over half of the C-ward prisoners are out of their cells. Somebody has started a fire in the basement and the smoke is spreading rapidly to the top. Many prisoners are trapped in their cells and yelling for help. Then they start breaking down walls with a sledgehammer, escaping from one cell into another. I yell at my friend, Tonydog, to try to get out of his cell because he seemed the only one left to free himself. I can tell he is frightened, as he sticks his face out the window for air. An explosion somewhere! Someone says the power plant has blown up in the flames. They say the education building is burning up, also the gym. Eight modular trailers

Our water has been cut off. I've had to urinate in a cup and dump it out my window, because our toilets don't flush.

housing almost 200 prisoners are gradually burning, one-by-one.

Camp Hill Prison is in control of the prisoners as the night moves on. Police reinforcements are arriving by the minute but remain outside the fence. Mecha tells me I'd better try to get out, because the basement of our block is on fire. He says some propane tanks are under our block. Smoke is starting to fill our block. We are still locked-down but no guards are around.

C-ward prisoners are now all out in the yard. A prisoner in our block makes a hole through his wall and

gets out on the tier, but somehow a crowd of guards armed with shotguns and pistols come from the basement and catch him. They rough him up and tell us the fire is out and to open our windows to let the smoke out.

Ten p.m.

Prisoners are still rampaging outside, some starting fires to stay warm. Some hold up a blanket so others can shit in privacy. Some are asking us for food, cigarettes and blankets.

October 27, Friday

Early Morning Hours

A helicopter with a spot light has appeared and they are using a loudspeaker to order the prisoners to lie on the ground with their hands on the back of their heads. At the same time, masses of guards and state police creep into the yard with clubs and shotguns. The prisoners are instructed to line up by the fence and hit the ground. All are handcuffed and ordered to walk towards the corner of the yard. Now the guards have cleared the prisoners away from their personal belongings; they are opening footlockers and bags, looking for weapons, breaking and busting T.V.s with their billy clubs, picking up radios and T.V.s and dropping them. Once everything is opened and wrecked, the guards leave.

Now the prisoners rush to their belongings, but all is confusion because everything is mixed. Some of the prisoners just don't care anymore about their belongings. Within an hour, most are coming loose from the handcuffs; one guy was expert at unlocking them. Some refused to take them off.

The guards finally have come to our block and give us small T.V. dinners and a half pint of milk. This is our first meal since October 25. Our water has been cut off. I've had to urinate in a cup and dump it out my window, because our toilets don't flush. I had gotten very hungry, and my neighbor, Dave, gave me a box of "Little Debbie" that I shared with Bernard a few cells up from me.

A special state police team viciously and brutally rush in our block . . . They all seem to be possessed. They stick their shotguns through the bars and point them at our bodies . . . Some of them threaten to kill us if we don't obey. A prisoner on the top tier is getting beat up because he kept saying we had nothing to do with the riot.

Most prisoners have T.V.s and radios, I have nothing but my Bible. I keep praying this will all be over soon. I haven't been able to sleep from all the chaos and noises, including the constant thumping of the helicopter propeller. I am exhausted, and my bones ache from laying on the hard floor.

The news reports that prisoners in the big yard still have hostages, but their condition is unknown. The whole prison looks like an inferno, and the authorities don't seem much concerned about it. Some armed guards enter our block and pass out medications, but only to those who badly need it.

About 10 p.m.

I'm not sure of the exact time. About five school buses have arrived. The prisoners holding the hostages have surrendered. The casualties, prisoners and guards, are estimated at about 100. A lot of prisoners were beaten by other prisoners for not participating in the riot. Some guards were beaten and stabbed.

(Continued on Page 35)

Pranks.

When RE/Search told people they were doing a book on pranks, virtually everyone said, "Save me from boring juvenilia, it will never sell." It arrived hot, nasty and funny as hell.

Walking the edge between the overthrow of ordinary reality and art, it examines the worlds of the classical prankster, the deranged detonator and the frustrated performance artist. These are people with an excellent sense of cultural outrage, mixed in with locker-room practical jokers. It leaves a good feeling about the potential for overthrowing the dominant culture. Chances of seeing this one inside are slim, but you got nothing to lose by trying.

The Prison Experience

Morrie Camhi photo/essay
140 pages \$34.95 (1990) Tuttle-IPC, 28
South Main Street, Rutland, VT 05701

Modern Primitives: Tattoo/ Piercing/Scarification

V. Vale & Andrea Juno
\$14.99 (1987) RE/Search Publications,
20 Romolo #B, San Francisco, CA 94133

PRANKS: Devious Deeds

V. Vale & Andrea Juno
\$14.99 (1987) RE/Search Publications,
20 Romolo #B, San Francisco, CA 94133

[all available through CITY LIGHTS,
261 COLUMBUS, San Francisco, CA
94133; the RE/Search books can also be
ordered directly from their Romolo
address]

X

Prisons

Prisons:
Blocking;
Holding;
Retaining;

The Matter
Human. . .

From Freely Flowing

Into The Sewer
Of Active

Life. . .

—Michelle Yvette Frayer
Louisiana Correctional I
nstitution for Women
St. Gabriel, Louisiana

Rampage — Cont'd from Page 9

About midnight

A special state police team viciously and brutally rush in our block. They are shouting and ordering us to lie on our stomachs and place our hands on top of our heads. They all seem to be possessed. They stick their shotguns through the bars and point them at our bodies: "Get the fuck on the floor NOW! Hit it, you bastard, on the floor NOW!" They stick their billy clubs through the bars and hit some of the prisoners. Some of them threaten to kill us if we don't obey. A prisoner on the top tier is getting beat up because he kept saying we had nothing to do with the riot.

The whole episode is terrifying. Thoughts flash through my head: "Are they going to execute us from the blind side?" They refuse to be identified and demand we place our nose and eyes to the floor. They sweep through the whole block, then leave.

From the fear implanted in us, some of us stay on the floor flat on our face for minutes after they leave. Getting up and looking out my window, I see all the prisoners outside lined up by the fence. I estimate about 300 state police and guards there. The helicopter swings back and forth, ordering the prisoners through a

loudspeaker to get by the fence with their hands on top of their heads.

Then the guards surround them, proceeding forward like a wall. The prisoners have their backs to the guards, who rough them up. I see swinging clubs crashing on prisoners' heads. Some with their hands cuffed behind their backs are dragged by the hair. About 10 ambulances parked to the side of A-ward are being loaded with injured prisoners, some of whom are unconscious.

After all the prisoners are handcuffed, they are forced to sit on the ground, where they stay for hours. Some time after midnight they start loading buses with prisoners. Where they go I don't know, but we hear on the radio that some are transferred to federal prisons.

I have a nightmare...the guards came in and started killing prisoners. When they got to me, I told them to shoot me, because I didn't want to suffer anymore. As a guard was pulling the trigger back, in my deep sleep, I was even hoping it wasn't a dream.

October 28

Saturday, 12:30 p.m.

We're fed one sandwich and one apple. We are lucky! The prisoners out in the yard, suffering from cold, didn't seem to get fed at all. What's more, they were handcuffed for hours. As the guards pass out food in A-ward, they tell us we are lucky. In the other blocks they have four prisoners to a cell, shackled, handcuffed, and in their underwear. Sometime in the afternoon our water comes back on. I take a bird bath and fill up cups in case it goes off again. I drink about 10 cups from thirst. I wash everything I can, shirts, socks, sheets, and clean my cell. I am moody for lack of cigarettes. I pace back and forth until I am tired, then fall asleep.

I have a nightmare and wake up sweating. I dreamed the guards came in and started killing prisoners. When they got to me, I was praying God to forgive them and forgive me for all my sins. Then I told the guards to shoot me, because I didn't want to suffer anymore, that "I'd rather be dead!" As a guard was pulling the trigger back, in my deep sleep I was even hoping it wasn't a dream.

I wake to a flashlight in my face, realizing everything was a dream, sweating. I try going back to sleep; no luck. I hear noises of rats and mice

fumbling around the trash thrown by prisoners out on the tier. Prisoners on the top tier don't have to worry about the rats; we on the bottom aren't so lucky. We have to cope with those conditions, and that has led to threats among the prisoners.

October 29

Sunday morning

This is the second Sunday I have missed chapel. After a year of solid attendance, I first missed because I failed to sign up on the church list. I need not explain this second time, as our predicament goes on. Nevertheless, I read a few scriptures from the Book of Luke. I pray again for the guards, the families of the hostages, and the prisoners who were hospitalized. I think of my family. I wonder if they know about my suffering. I've been getting intense headaches, and I pray I won't go crazy. I think to do some pushups, but I am too weak to keep up.

About 1:30 p.m.

I look out the window and see some prisoners walking with shackles on their ankles, handcuffed together. First there are two, then they multiply to about 50. They walk as though they are stiff old men towards the fence with a few guards following.

About 4 p.m.

The prisoners outside have been sitting, waiting. More buses line up in the yard. By now about 300 prisoners are being loaded into them.

They will imprison us.
They will fine us.
They will seize our possessions.
But they cannot take away our self-respect
if we do not give it to them.

...
But we cannot lose — we cannot.
They may torture my body,
Break my bones,
Even kill me.
Then they will have my dead body.
Not my obedience!

—Mahatma Gandhi

The 6 o'clock news reports disturbances at Holmsburg and Graterford prisons. Hours have passed without a guard showing up on A-ward. When they do come, they look like hunters, swinging their weapons as they walk. I want to shout that we didn't have anything to do with the riot, but their faces display too much hate and vengeance.

This is our fifth day of lockdown. The temperature outside has been about 60 degrees in the afternoon, and the guards have had our heaters on. But at night, when the temperature drops, they turn off the heat. Tonight I will again sleep with all my clothes on.

October 30

Monday noon

They come in, throwing our T.V. dinners on the floor cell-by-cell, showing no respect. Some of the dinners are burnt to the paper plate. I am getting very angry and confused in my feelings. I try to love my enemies, as the Bible teaches. I want to yell, but I don't.

About 6 p.m.

Medications are passed out by a crowd of armed state police. They look as though they are guarding the President. The news reports that five prisoners are missing and are thought to be hiding inside the prison. Or, perhaps they died in the fires. That explains why the guards walk as though expecting an ambush.

I try sleeping, but too many thoughts prevent it. I think of all the women I've had, even the ones I failed to have. The laughter and intimate moments. I think of my kids and children of women other than mine. I think about drugs, how I came to depend on them. The way they controlled my life and got me in this mess. I start to hate life and think how sweet death would be.

A guard tells a prisoner who asked how long we will be locked down,

"A long, long time." I think, "If I go two more weeks of this torment, I will gain the courage to hang myself, or have a few guards beat me until my blood pours out from my head all over my cell, bars, walls, all over just puddles of blood, thick and red. I just want this loneliness and pain to end.

October 31

Tuesday morning

I awake just before dawn, read a few scriptures. I think of a nice, hot breakfast; we haven't seen breakfast for six days. From supper we go 19 hours without food until lunch. At 9 a.m. medications are dispensed. At 11:45 we get two sandwiches, one piece of cake, and a half pint of milk.

So much trash has accumulated in front of the bottom tiers that the guards have a rough time walking over it. Even food has been thrown there.

About 5 p.m. T.V. dinners again. This time my dinner was cold, so I made a toilet paper donut and heated my meal. The chaplain comes by, passing out cards so that the prisoners can mail a note to their families. Only one card per prisoner, but the first sign of outgoing mail. I write mine to Chaplain Link.

November 1

Wednesday morning

Last night I had trouble getting to sleep. The heaters were turned off, and the night was very cold. I thought of those prisoners on the other side of the prison, four to a cell, handcuffed and shackled. Those brothers are suffering in a way they will never forget. This morning makes eight days of lockdown. As I read my Bible, I hear guards coming down the tier, some state police and some correctional officers, including three females. They are searching each cell thoroughly. We have to strip naked; then they handcuff us through the bars of the cell. Then with our hands on top of the head, we step backwards out of the cell.

Before they come to me, I see one guard with rubber gloves take his hand and spread one prisoner's ass. I hope he won't search me, because I will snap out. I luck out: I have a female, a pretty black lady whose search team is very different from the other teams. I see a lot of prisoners' personal stuff trashed. Radios, T.V.'s, commissary food, rugs, even family pictures and legal material end up on top of all the trash if a prisoner gives the guards any feedback.

After they finish, they assign two state police on each end of the top and bottom tiers, armed with shotguns. I start thinking about how we were compelled to strip naked in front of women by the fear of guns and the realization that, if we refused, they would rough us up with clubs.

The news quotes one guard as saying that some of the guards who were hostages were raped, also some of the prisoners. That explains why they have been so wicked to us.

November 2, Thursday

Every night seems the same — not much sleep but plenty suffering from lack of food. I think I have lost about 10 pounds.

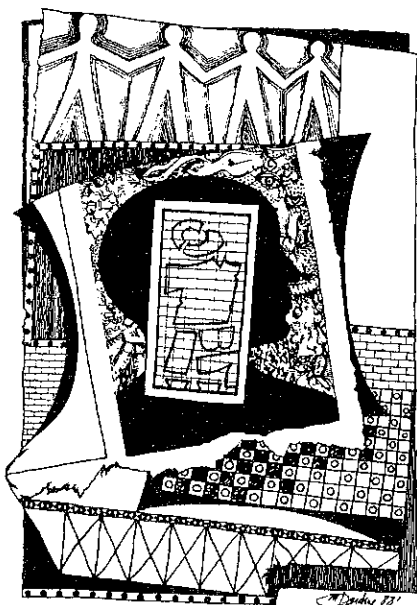
About 2 p.m.

We are fed, then some dudes in street clothes kindly ask if we have someone we wish them to call. I pass it by, because in my world there is only my father and he is supposed to be on a business trip to Puerto Rico. I play cards by myself and start to think how lonely I feel; I can't blame anyone but myself. In disgust, I slam the deck of cards down, then slap them off the table. I become more miserable and bitter each day. I open the Bible to the book of Psalms and surrender my hostility to it.

About 4:30 p.m.

They feed us a sandwich and piece of cake. Now we wait another 19 hours for the next meal. I think my stomach is shrinking. Before the riot I wore size 34 pants; soon I'll fit a 28.

Just as I'm ready to try to sleep, about 10 guards come on the tier



with crates of chains and locks. They place them around our doors. I think they plan to never let us out.

November 3

Friday morning

I look at myself, noticing how rapidly I am emaciating. Before, I weighed 170 lbs., now I feel like 150. I was lifting weights and carrying a solid structure on this frame. Now Pee-Wee Herman looks better than I. I know they can feed us better, because we heard that they have the small kitchen in operation. As they change posts in A-ward, one state policeman tells the other that they are having pancakes and bacon for breakfast and chicken for dinner. He said it loudly so all we prisoners could hear.

About 11 a.m.

Guards and state police return for a random search in the block. They search my cell and take a little stuff. Then they go to Daul's cell and clean him out completely. They smash his new T.V. with a club, take his family photos, even his Holy Koran, and discard them on top of the trash. We have heard that the guards are being personal on the Muslim brothers, blaming the riot on a group called "The Fruit of Islam."

Noon

The news reports that the American Civil Liberties Union has been denied entrance to the prison. A.C.L.U. wants to investigate allegations of cruel and unusual punishment. I assume they refer to the brothers on the other side of the prison, still shackled and handcuffed, no showers, four to a cell.

November 4

Saturday morning

I cover my bars with a sheet to take a bird bath. A few guards come and tell me to take it down. I say, "As soon as I get done," but they reply, "Take it down NOW!" I see the evil in their eyes, so I obey to avoid a situation.

I wonder about the prisoners on the other side, handcuffed and shackled for a week. How do they manage to use the toilet or clean themselves with legs shackled together? We hear that some are handcuffed behind their backs and have to eat like dogs unless they can get another prisoner to feed them. I pray God to give those brothers strength and protection to overcome such barbaric punishment.

November 6, Monday

I've slacked off on writing, the days and nights have been slow. Yesterday and today I read my Bible. They are taking three prisoners at a time out for showers, the first since the riot began 13 days ago. We have to wear handcuffs.

They bring a few prisoners from the other side into empty A-ward cells. I notice they are in very bad shape. The guards stiff some as they walk to the showers, filthy, with mud, piss and shit stains on their underwear. You can see the pain in their eyes. I view them as warriors who survived inhumane, barbaric treatment.

November 8, Wednesday

The feeding remains the same. One dude brought in from the other side tells me that he had been handcuffed and shackled until today, and they beat him up because he didn't get up fast enough when ordered — he was even handcuffed at the time.

The T.V. news reports that the A.C.L.U. won their suit on behalf of the prisoners. The court ordered that the handcuffs and shackles must come off by November 10. Those brothers have been like that for two weeks.

November 9, Thursday:

Prisoners are being transferred to California, Texas, Ohio and the Lewisburg Federal Prison. I have a feeling a lot will be denied parole, especially those who were out of their cells.

November 10, Friday

Breakfast a little better, a whole pecan roll. Two prisoners have been handcuffed and let out to clean the tiers. If only they would trust more of the prisoners, this damn prison could be back in shape sooner. We still are handcuffed when we shower. I notice the state police are getting tired of babysitting us.

November 13, Monday

The guards make a list of prisoners that need underclothes. The news reports that prisoners' family members were in front of the governor's office to request a meeting with Governor Casey about punishment of prisoners that didn't participate in the riot and cancellation of visitation. They are talking about suing. A meeting is scheduled for tomorrow.

November 15, Wednesday

Yesterday I was moved to cell 11 on tier 2 of A-ward; my celly is "Cool Moe Jeff," a homeboy. I was glad to see he has a color T.V., but I have to sleep on the floor on a mattress. Jeff

and I talk a lot, mostly about the riot. He said that when they were conducting the search sweep, he got maced in the face by a female guard. He had lost 60 percent of his hearing from a stroke; he was standing by the bars when everyone was ordered to step back, and he didn't hear the order. So, he got maced.

The view out the window, where the modular units used to be, now is of contractors cleaning up the area with bulldozers. Jeff told me that when the modular units burned, he could feel the heat in his cell.

November 18, Saturday

They let us have showers without handcuffs, but some of the guards are very disrespectful. They keep yelling at us, and the shower water is cold. They have the windows wide open, so we are in a draft. We have only liquid soap and no washcloth.

Some prisoners are getting edgy and argue over food, and trade for cigarettes; some make loud threats. I read the Bible and think if everyone would just stop to remember those other brothers that endured all that hardship, they would be content for how lucky we were on this block. We heard that a lot of the Fruit of Islam brothers had been abused and beaten.

November 21, Monday

Today the guards are on the news, telling about how tired they are from working overtime and how understaffed the prison is. They complain that they must now do a lot of work that prisoners used to do.

Maintenance crews are installing an extra bunk in all single cells. Many prisoners are willing to cooperate and work together to get the prison back in shape. Just to be out of the cell doing something is a relief. But, they won't trust anyone yet.

November 23, Thanksgiving Day

Our first blanket of snow on Thanksgiving since 1971, about three inches fell last night. It's been so long since I last had a Thanksgiving dinner with a family member or loved one. Maybe it was 1980, with Maria and her kids. We lived together in a nice cozy apartment. My mother committed suicide that year, and I was convicted for an armed robbery that I didn't do.

Today was my release date, but all cases are being held back because of the riot... I guess all I can do is keep praying that I will be released some time soon.

January 25

After Thanksgiving, everything slowed down. I was moved to F-ward, saw a prisoner there whose wrists were deeply cut from the handcuffs. Another told me he had been handcuffed and shackled for 19 days in a two-bunk cell with three others.

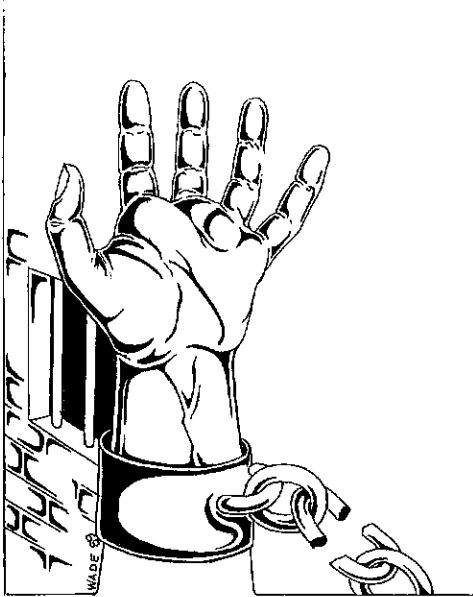
A fight occurred in the second cell from mine. A Puerto Rican dude had been talking about problems with his celly and asked for a transfer. But it got worse and grew into a rumble. All the chains on the door slowed the guards from getting in to stop it and prevent injury — they had to unlock three padlocks.

More than two hundred prisoners have been charged with participating in the riot, and more will be charged.

Today was my release date, but all cases are being held back because of the riot. We are still locked down, eating the same kind of meals, following the same routines. It is said that this prison won't be back to normal until June or later. I guess all I can do is keep praying that I will be released some time soon.

March 3

I need reading material. We have no library, because it was turned to ashes in the riot. The entire prison remains the same in terms of the buildings, because no contractors want to do the job. Governor Casey won't pay the price. Meanwhile, we prisoners have to sit in our cells and wait for them to make a move. It is very dull and frustrating. Another big-shot resigned. First it was the warden, the captain and a few others. Now Pennsylvania Corrections Commissioner David Owens. I guess he thought the kitchen was getting too hot for him.



The cost of repair and replacement of the damaged facilities at Camp Hill is estimated at \$15 million and will not be completed before mid-summer, 1990. According to the Families of Pennsylvania Prisoners Newsletter, guard brutality, along with other bad conditions, triggered lesser but serious riots at Pennsylvania's Huntington and Holmsburg prisons in the same month as the Camp Hill rampage. Governor Casey's response has been to appoint another committee to study the riots. History repeats itself: a committee was appointed in the early 1950s to study a series of riots in the same system. The bad conditions that were judged to have caused the riots then, for the most part persist to today. One wonders, how many riots must occur in the future before the same bad conditions get corrected?

A Pennsylvania prisoner phrased it forcefully in a recent letter to the Families of Pennsylvania Prisoners Newsletter. The question is not how did the prisoners take command of the prison. Prisoners can take command of their prisons any

Editor's epilogue: One of Tito's fellow prisoners added the following to the tale of rampage:

During the riot, I was scared about getting my ass kicked by angry police and sticks, so I stayed in the cell in H-block until they came and got me and four others. Many people were getting the shit kicked out of them while being escorted to the big yard.

We were handcuffed behind our backs and made to kneel almost 10 hours, no food or water. They kept us in the yard three nights and four days. The first day was hell. I didn't want to say a word, but my hands turned blue because of the cuffs being so tight. We had to sleep with paper sheets. Some guys had no shirts on.

On later days the state police treated us like dogs. They would yell, hit with sticks, you name it. They fed us TV dinners, but they threw them down on the ground, some spilling out or turning over. They made a place called "the pit" for some prisoners that would not take the abuse sitting down. They would put you face down in piles of horse shit and the horse would walk around you.

On the fourth day, they started taking people back to the cell blocks, about 150 yards away. They made us run while shackled, being pushed, hit with sticks and pushed by a horse.

In the block they made me close my eyes while being strip-searched. They smashed my face against the wall, luckily I was quick enough to

knock my glasses off. They put us four in a cell in our shorts (some had nothing). No beds, no heat, no toilet paper. We were handcuffed and shackled in pairs for 15 days and fed only twice a day. During those days one could hear the police hitting people. They made everyone stand at the back of the cell when they did this. I saw people getting bum-rushed and I hated it but could do nothing.

We were handcuffed and made to kneel almost 10 hours, no food or water.

Now in mid-February we are still all locked down. I like to read, but we have no access to the library. A friend of mine gets your magazine, and I read it. But he has been moved to another block, and I cannot get it any more. The prison threw all of our belongings away, and we are trying to get a refund for our stuff.

I need reading material, so I can keep my mind off the treatment they give us here. We are in our cells 24 hours a day except for yard twice a week for an hour and a half, and showers two or three times a week for three minutes. I've never felt so alone in my life, or so bored." (We sent him a gift copy of our first issue; those brothers deserve it!)

time they please. The prisoners outnumber the guards by an overwhelming majority. A relatively small group of determined prisoners can capture any prison. They won't be able to hold it against the army of police that the state can counterattack with. But before that army of police can be assembled and sent in to regain control, the prisoners can kill all of their hostages and burn down the jail. No matter how secure a prison is, it is always in jeopardy of being taken over by the prisoners.

"The question Governor Casey should ask is, 'What causes prisoners to become so desperate that they are willing to risk their lives in a prison riot where they know there is no hope of their winning?'

"To face this question squarely and head on is to look without flinching at the inhumane living conditions, the arbitrary, arrogant and assaultive personnel, the unreasonable, demeaning and unnecessary restrictions on family contact and communication, and the countless other grievances that make possible death preferable to life as we live it behind these walls and fences of cement and metal.

WHO Rampaged?



Photo Credit: Stuart Leask, Harrisburg, PA

I am a Pennsylvania State prisoner, having served ten years on a life sentence (Pennsylvania does not have a minimum sentence for lifers). For most of those years I was warehoused at the State Correctional Institution at Camp Hill where a riot occurred last October.

After the state police stormed the 52-acre compound (the prisoners controlled most of the prison), the conditions for us became unconstitutional

(as stated by District Judge Sylvia Rambo). The state police and guards became uncivilized animals.

During the ensuing weeks, the inmate population of 2,600+ was depleted to about 800. The other 1,800 prisoners were scattered to other state and federal prisons.

The public has not been well informed of the post-riot conditions which we have had to endure. Many

prisoners fear speaking out, for they may be then charged with rioting as retaliation. I hope to break that mindset. Every one of the 2,600 MUST speak out.

I encourage you to write to U.S. Senators Arlen Specter and John Heinz to protest the inhumane conditions and call for investigations. A letter I wrote is reproduced on the opposite page.

(Also see my announcement in *Prison Penpals* page 44.)

The Honorable Arlen Specter
United States Senator
9400 Federal Building
600 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Dear Senator Specter:

I am a Pennsylvania State prisoner who was housed at the State Correctional Institution at Camp Hill before, during, and after the disturbance which occurred in October. I request an unbiased investigation into the intentional misconduct of the Pennsylvania State Police and corrections staff after the disturbance.

In its Final Report of December 21, 1989, the Adams Commission stated that it is not empowered to investigate inmate abuse and recommended that the State Inspector General conduct such an investigation. As your constituent, I request that you call for investigations by the State Inspector General, the Senate and House Judiciary Committees and other appropriate bodies into the intentional, inhumane abuse of prisoners of the State Correctional Institution at Camp Hill by the Pennsylvania State Police and institutional staff from October 29, 1989 to present.

Please remember, Senator, that only a small percentage of the 2,600+ prisoners participated in the disturbance. Nonetheless, every prisoner was subjected to inhumane, unconstitutional treatment. One state police corporal summed-up the situation well when a prisoner asked how he was supposed to urinate while handcuffed behind the back. The corporal replied, "We've been told to treat you like shit, and that's what we're going to do."

It is inhumane and should shock your conscience, Senator:

- that prisoners were denied water for 36 hours;
- that prisoners ate food from the ground while handcuffed behind their backs;
- that restraints on the prisoners' hands cut off circulation, causing nerve damage;
- that being handcuffed behind the back, prisoners were unable to urinate or defecate for up to 14 hours;
- that the state police horses kicked, defecated upon, and stomped prisoners as they sat and lay handcuffed and leg-shackled on the ground;
- that prisoners were urinated upon by state police troopers while confined to the troopers' "Penalty Box";
- that state police took prisoners for so-called "runs" on the running track in the main stockade field (a "run" entailed two state police troopers turning a prisoner face down on the ground, slipping a billy club through the prisoner's leg shackles, and dragging the prisoner (face down) on the cinder track, over concrete curbs and through horse manure);
- that prisoners were forced (under penalty of physical beatings) to lie face down in horse manure;
- that prisoners slept outside without blankets or other cover except clothing for the first of three nights spent in the main stockade field;
- that prisoners were routinely beaten by state police troopers for requesting water, medical treatment or loosening of restraints on wrists and legs; that corrections officers literally ripped clothing, wristwatches, eyeglasses, etc., from prisoners' bodies ("We'll give you a good reason to want medical help," the troopers remarked as prisoners were dragged off);
- that corrections officers beat prisoners' bodies (knees, arms, and ribs were favored areas) with billy clubs when the latter were forced to run through a gauntlet comprised of corrections officers;
- that prisoners were beaten when forced to run (while leg shackled to another person) and after having arrived at the cell blocks;
- that prisoners slept on concrete slabs for up to two weeks; that prisoners were denied toilet paper, soap, adequate food, showers, toothpaste, toothbrushes, combs, blankets, mattresses, sheets, etc., for up to two weeks;
- that many prisoners were removed from the cells and beaten by corrections officers and state police troopers;
- that corrections officers deposited mail delivered by the U.S. Postal Service into trash cans;
- that prisoners were limited to two-minute cold showers (only after a federal court ordered showers) while handcuffed, in shower rooms with windows opened, exposing the prisoners to the outside winter temperatures; and
- that corrections officers forcibly removed dentures from prisoners' mouths.

Additionally, it should be investigated why state police troopers and corrections staff intentionally destroyed and took prisoners' property to the formers' homes and gave the remainder to the Salvation Army and Goodwill. The prisoners' property was not destroyed during the disturbance; it was destroyed by state police troopers and corrections staff while all of the prisoners were quartered in the outside yard areas for the seventy-two hours following the state police assault on October 29, 1989.

State police troopers and corrections staff, acting as agents for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, were accountable to nobody at the time — the situation at SCI-Camp Hill, beginning on October 29, 1989 resembled Nazi Germany. In fact, one state police lieutenant (Dave) was saluted by his subordinates (right hand straight up in the air, palm forward) who yelled "Seig Heil!" Nobody was able to come to the prisoners' rescue from this regime.

Thank you, Senator, for your attention to my request for unbiased investigations and provision of information and documents.

Sincerely,

Scott S. Davis