

Riot in W. Germany

Liberation News Service

1970

NOTE: Last issue we carried a brief story on a stockade revolt in Mannheim, W. Germany. The following is a longer account from Liberation News Service.

Mannheim, West Germany (LNS) — Another Army stockade has broken out in rebellion.

About 100 GI inmates of the Mannheim, West Germany U.S. Army stockade broke out of their cell blocks on March 13, set fire to stockade buildings demolishing a number of cell blocks, the stockade chapel and -some administrative offices—and fought a two-hour battle with MPs and confinement officers.

While one group of prisoners fought with MPs, another ran through cell blocks A and C with keys they had taken from an overpowered guard, releasing the long-term prisoners confined there. Out in the stockade yard, the rebels built a barricade out of overturned bunks and defended it for hours against MPs and German Army troops—sent in as reinforcements by the brass—before they were finally subdued.

The Army has tried its best to put a news blackout on the rebellion. When this became impossible, they released a statement admitting that there had been a “disturbance” in the stockade, but refused to give any details. Establishment media coverage of the rebellion has been almost non-existent.

The Army has not yet pressed charges but, as in previous stockade rebellions, they are trying to pick out some scapegoats.

Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID) agents are questioning participants. GIs inside the stockade tell us that prisoners who “cooperate” with the Army, making statements incriminating their brothers, are allowed to return to their normal cell blocks while others are sent to “the box”—a six-foot-square cage with six or more men in each.

Word from inside the stockade is that most of the GIs are not succumbing to this tactic. One GI told of CID’s efforts to threaten him into naming one person responsible for the revolt. “I told them ‘Man, I was evacuating a burning building.’”

Another GI participant in the rebellion managed to smuggle out the following account of the events:

“On Friday the 13th of March, a group of turn-keys, taking part in their nightly recreation, pulled a brother out of his cell and beat him brutally. In another cell-block, turnkeys were hassling brothers trying to go on medication call.

“Five months ago, a brother was dragged out of his cell and the next morning he was found dead. The officials claim he hung himself. His cellmates know otherwise. The guy had 36 hours left in the pound and his friends heard him scream out for help.”

“This time the GIs at Mannheim were not going to let this happen. With bunk adapters, sticks, and clubs taken from the- pigs, we seized the time and over 90 black and white GIs were out of their cells, liberating our brother cellmates. THE PEOPLE WERE SWINGING AND THE PIGS WERE SWAYING.

“We ripped down the tear gas canisters from our cells and tossed them at the pigs. Anything we could find—shoes, cans, chairs, desks, fire extinguishers, cell doors.

“Four times the turnkeys came back down the halls and four times they picked up tails and oinked back to cover. We set afire barricades of bunks and mattresses and then outside reinforcements came—German riot squads with tear gas, MPs with guns, firemen with hoses—and drove us out into the courtyard.

“We were made to stand at attention for two hours. One brother collapsed and the pigs went in on him with more brutality. Finally they had to take this unconscious brother to the dispensary. All others standing were denied medical attention, which some needed badly.

“Finally, the pigs threw everyone into solitary confinement blocks. Blocks 5x8x8, with more than six men in each block. All of us were stripped and watered down and afterwards they threw garbage on us. The MPs opened the windows and turned off the radiators, so we had to stay in the wet and cold all night and day.

“They estimated over \$45,000 worth of damage was done to the stockade. The chapel, some offices, and military files were destroyed.

“The turnkeys had a difficult time getting outside reinforcements. At 2 A.M. they attempted to round up guys to help ‘protect the stockade.’ One GI who was alerted shouted, ‘If you don’t want another riot right here, you’d better get out. I’m not gonna put down my brothers!’”

The Mannheim stockade rebellion follows similar outbreaks at Fort Dix, N.J. (where 150 took part); Presidio, Calif.; Fort Carson, Colo; Fort Riley, Kansas; Long Binh stockade in Vietnam (affectionately referred to as LBJail by GIs) and Nuremburg, Germany, where last month over 50 of the 100 prisoners revolted.

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