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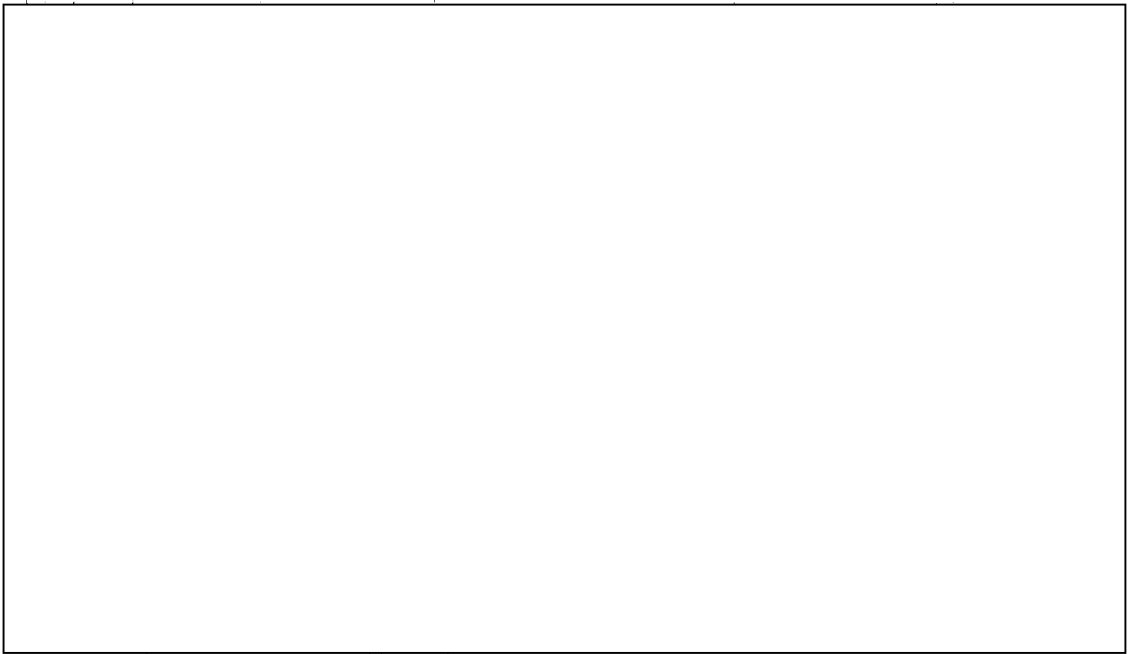
## Developments in Indochina

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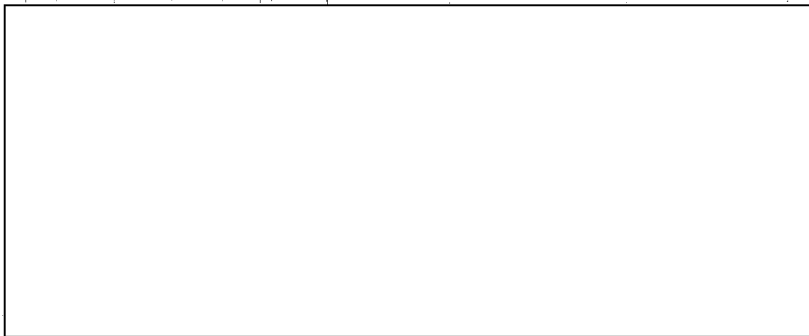
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143

September 24, 1974



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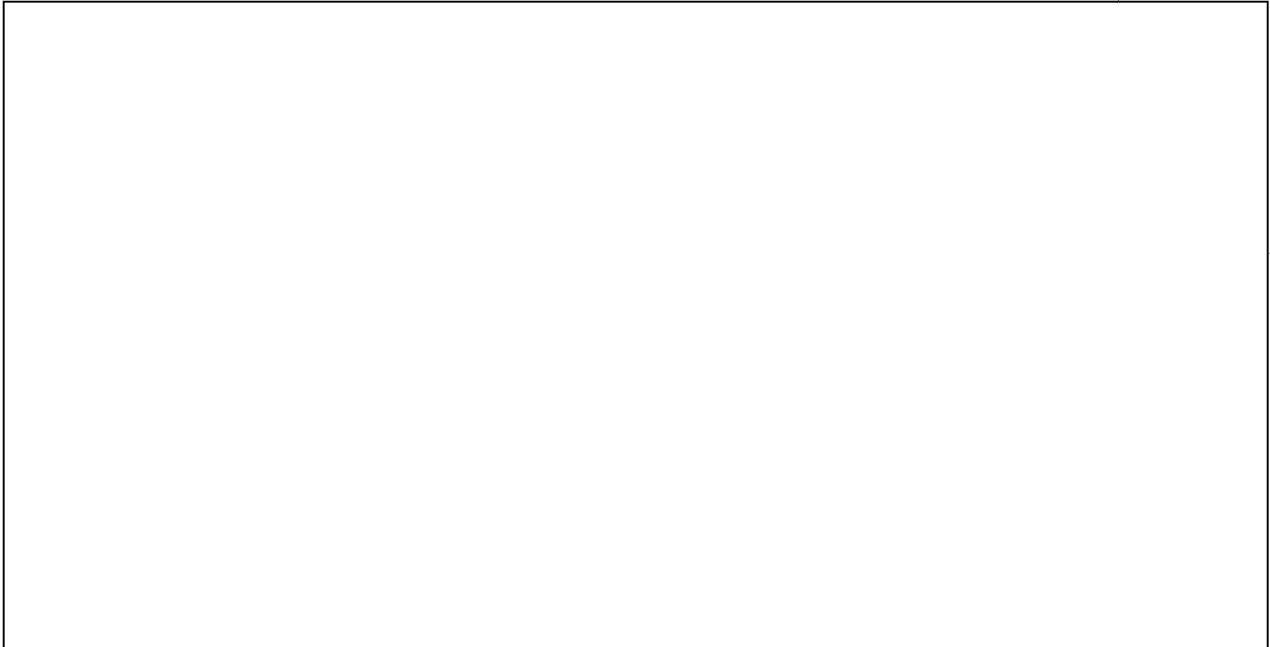


**DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA**

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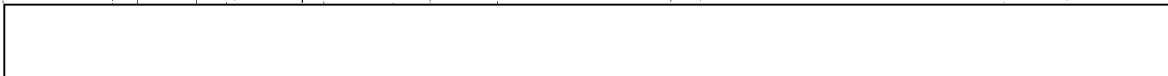
**CONTENTS**

September 24, 1974



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**LAOS**



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Freedom at Last. . . . . 15

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Freedom at Last  
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The first phase of the long-delayed prisoner-of-war exchange called for by the 1973 Lao accords was successfully implemented last week. The next exchange is tentatively scheduled to be held on September 29. The non-Communist side released seven Pathet Lao prisoners and 173 North Vietnamese captives. For their part, the Communists set free 20 Lao Army personnel, 150 Thai volunteers, and one American--civilian contract pilot Emmet Kay.

Kay's release occurred one day earlier than the others because, according to Pathet Lao spokesmen, the Communists considered his case "different." Not surprisingly, the Pathet Lao attempted to gain maximum propaganda mileage from Kay's release. They allowed only two individuals--a Pathet Lao official and leftist AFP journalist Jean Jacques Cazeaux--on board the British aircraft ferrying Kay from Sam Neua. On the basis of a taped interview with Kay in Sam Neua, Cazeaux subsequently published highly derogatory comments he claimed Kay had made regarding US policy in Indochina. The substance of Cazeaux's claims has been confirmed [redacted]

[redacted] had also indicated that Kay's anti-American remarks and the praise he heaped on his Pathet Lao captors appeared well-rehearsed and stage-managed by his Communist captors.

Upon arriving at his home in Honolulu several days later, Kay told newsmen that he had received only 15 minutes notice of his release at Sam Neua and that he was convinced that his captors had intended to destroy him "mentally" and send him home a "vegetable."

September 24, 1974

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The September 19 Exchange

Lao, Thai, and North Vietnamese prisoners were exchanged on September 19 at Phong Savang in Communist-controlled territory on the Plaine des Jarres amid a three-ring circus atmosphere. What was to have been a brief repatriation ceremony turned into a day-long affair when a Lao air force cargo plane transporting Communist prisoners from Vientiane landed in a muddy bomb crater on Phong Savang's primitive dirt airstrip.

North Vietnamese prisoners deliberately tried to embarrass their non-Communist captors at the repatriation ceremony. They refused to wear fresh uniforms or shoes provided for the occasion, and upon arrival at the Plaine des Jarres, the prisoners--who for the most part appeared to be in reasonably good health--complained of maltreatment by Lao army authorities, poor quality food, and lack of medical care. Some of them feigned illness and were given "injections" by Pathet Lao medical personnel. A few were evacuated on stretchers. In an effort to bill themselves as Lao nationals serving with the Pathet Lao at the time of their capture, the North Vietnamese unfurled Pathet Lao banners they had smuggled aboard their aircraft and shouted cheers for Pathet Lao leader Souphanouvong and the Lao Communist movement.

The Lao and Thai prisoners repatriated by the Pathet Lao appeared to be in generally good physical condition and their morale was high. The Lao told observers that they had traveled by truck for two days to reach Phong Savang, while the Thais reportedly claimed a 6 to 10 day trek--indicating that they may possibly have been incarcerated somewhere in North Vietnam. The Thai releasees indicated that at least 60 more of their colleagues remained to be exchanged at a later date. These figures fall far short of the 640 Thais that were previously estimated to be in Communist captivity.

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September 24, 1974