

# Hanoi, in a Surprise Move, To Free 20 in a Few Days

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By JOHN W. FINNEY FEB 14 1973

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 13—North Vietnam, in what appears to be a goodwill gesture, has agreed to release 20 more American prisoners of war within the next few days, the Pentagon announced to-

day. The decision to release the prisoners ahead of schedule was linked by a Pentagon spokesman to Henry A. Kissinger's visit to Hanoi over the weekend.

Jerry W. Friedheim, the Defense Department spokesman, said that during Mr. Kissinger's visit, North Vietnam "informed us it would release 20 prisoners ahead of schedule within the next few days."

It was not immediately clear whether North Vietnam or the United States took the initiative to speed up the prisoner exchange. Nor would Mr. Friedheim elaborate on whether the North Vietnamese move was in response to some action by the United States.

### Goodwill Gesture Seen

One possibility speculated upon by state department officials was that North Vietnam decided to release more men as a goodwill gesture to Mr. Kissinger, President Nixon's national security adviser, who was in Hanoi to discuss long-term relations between the United States and North Vietnam, including rehabilitation aid.

While Mr. Friedheim would say only that the Pentagon had received information on the

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second group of prisoners through "communications channels," it was apparent that word on the release was given directly to Mr. Kissinger while he was in Hanoi and then relayed to the Defense Department.

The Pentagon this morning received a list of the names of the 20 prisoners to be released and immediately began notifying their relatives. The list comprised 16 Air Force and 4 Navy men. The list included the following men from the New York metropolitan area:

- Abbott, Maj. Joseph S., Air Force, Salem, N. J.
- Crecca, Capt. Joseph Jr., Air Force, Bloomfield, N. J.
- Lane, Capt. Michael C., Air Force, New Haven.
- Milligan, Capt. Joseph E., Air Force, Asbury Park, N. J.

Details for the release of the second group will be worked out by the Four-Party Joint Military Commission created under the peace agreement. The expectation is that the release would follow the pattern of first freeing of 116 prisoners from North Vietnam on Sunday night, with an Air Force C-141 medical evacuation plane flying into Gia Lam Airport near Hanoi and taking the prisoners to Clark Air Base in the Philippines.

The North Vietnamese action came as somewhat of a surprise to Administration offi-

officials, who had expected that the next group would not be released by North Vietnam for at least another week and more likely two weeks.

The peace agreement signed on Jan. 27 provides that all prisoners are to be released within 60 days, but it sets no timetable for their release, except that the prisoners are to be released at the same rate as American troops are withdrawn from South Vietnam.

The United States is withdrawing men at a rate of 400 a day and is now down to 17,209 men, which is a reduction of slightly more than a fourth in the 23,400-man force in South Vietnam at the time of the cease-fire.

### Canadian Being Freed

OTTAWA, Feb. 13 (Reuters) — Marc Cayer, one of two Canadians held prisoners in North Vietnam, has been released in Hanoi, the External Affairs Minister, Mitchell W. Sharp, said in Commons today.

Mr. Cayer, a volunteer agricultural worker from St. Raymond, Quebec, was captured in Vietnam during the 1968 Tet offensive.

Mr. Sharp said Mr. Cayer had been released into the custody of the Canadian representative in Hanoi.

He said Mr. Cayer was well and in good spirits. His father has been informed, Mr. Sharp said.

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