3 Clevelanders Plea for Aid to Mme. Vinh

By DON ROBERTSON

Five months ago, a charming little Vietnamese lady visited Cleveland. Dark-eyed and lovely, she was as serene a woman as one could hope to encounter, and her quiet radiance was a joy to behold.

But that was five months ago. A lot can happen in five months. Five months ago, Mme. Hoang Ba Vinh, now knows this terrible truth. In about 150 days, her life has been turned upside down.

Consider these facts:

- Five months ago, Mme. Vinh's husband was a member of the Vietnamese parliament. Now he is in jail.
- Five months ago, Mme. Vinh's husband owned a barn-shoot concrete and operated a silica sand business. They have been seized by the new Vietnamese government.
- Five months ago, Mme. Vinh was a wealthy woman. Now she and her four children are practically destitute.

When she was here, Mme. Vinh was the house guest of Dr. and Mrs. Alexander Miller, 13700 Fairlull Road, Shaker Heights. Two and a half years ago, Dr. Miller, an orthopedic surgeon, was a staff member on the mercy ship Hope, which visited Saigon, the Viet Nam capital, under the auspices of the People-to-People Health Foundation. Dr. and Mrs. Vinh there, where she was in charge of the dozen or so volunteers who assisted the doctors and nurses.

Dr. and Mrs. Miller and a Maple Heights man now are in touch with the Vietnamese charge d'affaires in Washington. They were among the many letters written to Rep. Frances Bolton, R-22, who has been in touch with the State Department.

In a letter to Rep. Bolton, the State Department said it had learned that Vinh was being held for "investigation."

Rep. Bolton recently wrote the Millers to say that she had been in touch with U.S. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge. That is where matters stand today.

FIVE MONTHS AGO, when Mme. Vinh visited the Millers, she wore a traditional Vietnamese dress called an "ao dai." On the skirt of this dress, written in Chinese characters, were these words:

"Happiness and long life."

LaMarca is president of the Aurora Sand & Gravel Co. in Mantua. Mme. Vinh visited his quarry while a guest of the Millers.

"She was very interested in the way we operated," said LaMarca. "Her husband had a similar business, you know. And she certainly was a wonderful, open-hearted person. I think what's happened to her is awful. That's why I'm going to Washington."

According to a recent letter received by the Millers, Mme. Vinh's husband is crowded with 11 other men in a small cell. The letter said: "After the coup d'etat, there are some thousands man who are arrested by the government, and they are treated worse than to an animal."

Mme. Vinh's letter said the government had no evidence against her husband other than "possible anonymous letters." She said he had had no court hearing.

She wrote: "He is a victim of unheard injustices. I do not know what to do or where to look for justice. All newspapers in Saigon refused to publish my case for fear of closing their papers."

On Dec. 24, I went to visit my husband. Minutes. I could not recognize him. He is thinner than a skeleton. He told me he does not think he can live until they let him free."

LaMarca's appointment with the Vietnamese charge d'affaires was made through U.S. Rep. William E. Marsh, R-23. The Millers have written to Rep. Frances P. Bolton R-22, who has been in touch with the State Department.

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