

# A Bitter Saigon Critic Is Released From Jail

## Saigon

Ngo Ba Thanh, fiery critic of the South Vietnamese government, tottered out of jail yesterday, defiantly refusing to give up posters denouncing dictatorship.

She had scrawled them on toilet paper and cardboard while in jail.

Mrs. Thanh said her defiance almost convinced authorities to reverse their decision to free her.

"Those posters were my blood, my tears," said the frail, 43-year-old lawyer, who lost 48 pounds during a 5½-month hunger strike in jail. "They threatened to keep me if I didn't hand over those posters, but I refused and they finally threw up their hands and said, 'Get out of here.'"

## BAIL

Mrs. Thanh's release ended a two-year imprisonment. The South Vietnamese government announced Thursday that she and three dissident labor leaders would be released from jail on bail.

The announcement was considered a result of pressure from the U.S. Congress which has criticized South Vietnam's treatment of political prisoners.

## SEE

Mrs. Thanh's friends said that U.S. Representative Bella Abzug (Dem-N.Y.), played a role in obtaining her release. Mrs. Abzug visited Saigon last month and said Mrs. Thanh was 'the symbol of South Vietnam's political prisoners.'

"It's so wonderful to see

people, listen to birds, feel rain," said Mrs. Thanh during an interview at her home.

"But even when I was in prison, my head was free and I played the role I felt I must to influence the future of my country. Now that my body is no longer in jail, I will continue to play that role."

Mrs. Thanh sat curled in a chair sipping tea. She was clad in blue jeans two sizes too large and a huge blue angora sweater she had knitted and decorated with protest slogans while confined in a prison hospital. Her beaming family surrounded her for the first time in 24 months.

## TOUCH

She talked animatedly and often reached out to touch a daughter's face, a visitor's hand or her husband's knee.

"I want all political prisoners released immediately," she said. "There are thousands of them."

The South Vietnam government says it has no political prisoners — only Communist offenders and criminals.

Mrs. Thanh, who speaks seven languages, has been offered a teaching post at New York's Columbia University, where she once studied. The government has not indicated whether she will be permitted to leave the country.

## JUDGE

Mrs. Thanh was arrested Aug. 17, 1971, on a charge of assaulting a judge. She was released a month later but arrested again Sept. 18, 1971, during a demonstration outside the National Assembly.

Mrs. Thanh previously had spent more than two years behind bars for opposi-

## Marines Leave a Thai Base

## bangkok

A U.S. Marine lowered the American flag at Nam Phong air base yesterday as the last of the 2100 Marine stationed there left Thailand.

The departure of the last 2100 Marines concluded three weeks of withdrawal activity which began August 30. It reduced U.S. troop strength in Thailand to fewer than 40,000 men and about 400 planes.

The six-year-old Nam Phong air base, 250 miles northeast of Bangkok, will be manned by Thai army and air force personnel, Thai military sources said.

*Associated Press*

ition activities. She heads the anti-government Women's Movement for the Right to Live.

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