

Hanoi Frees 3 P.O.W.'s; Wife and Mother Greet 2

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By The Associated Press

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HANOI, North Vietnam, Sept. 17 — An American mother clasped her son and an American wife embraced her husband here tonight in a room hot with television lights, at the release ceremony for three American prisoners of war, pilots shot down over North Vietnam.

Mrs. Olga Charles, who had flown from San Diego, Calif., had had her hair washed and set in a downtown Hanoi beauty shop today. She fought through a wall of Vietnamese and European TV technicians and cameramen to embrace her husband, Lieut. (jg.) Norris A. Charles, 27 years old. He wore a neat gray civilian suit.

Mrs. Minnie Lee Gartley of Dunedin, Fla., had for four years picketed Congress and the White House for an end to the war and the release of her son, Lieut. (jg.) Mark L. Gartley, 28.

"He's even better-looking than I had remembered," she said after embracing him.

Also released was Maj. Edward K. Elias, 34, of the Air Force, who until yesterday had expected his wife or father to come for him. Before microphones, Major Elias said: "I have been told that for various reasons they could not make it, but I will be seeing them soon."

Each pilot made a statement into microphones before the official release. The men said they had been fitted for new clothes and that they were in good health. They will stay with Mrs. Charles, Mrs. Gartley and the rest of a delegation of American antiwar activists until their return home later in the week.

The pilots—one of whom, Lieutenant Gartley, had been

Continued on Page 13, Column 1

Continued From Page 11, Col. 7

imprisoned four years—slid easily into freedom. After the 40-minute release ceremony at the People's Army quarters, they were escorted to automobiles and departed past a group of about 30 North Vietnamese civilians to the Hoabinh Hotel.

There, a banquet of Vietnamese food and drink was waiting, but Lieutenant Charles said: "I would give anything right now for a scotch, some J & B."

A reporter asked: "Will you settle for a bottle of Chivas Regal. I have one."

"Do you want to twist my arm," the lieutenant replied. Cora Weiss, a co-chairman of the Committee of Liaison with Families of Servicemen Detained in Vietnam, which arranged the release, raised the first toast, in a Vietnamese cordial. Then she said, "Let's make a second in scotch."

Lieutenant Charles, raising his glass, said, "I want to make a toast to the good people of America who brought this about."

A 'Great Step'

In his statement before the microphones Major Elias said: "I was a little disappointed not to see my relatives here tonight. However, I feel I will see them very soon. I sincerely hope an dpray that this act of release will be a great step to the end of the war and for the future release of all P.O.W.'s, both here and in the South."

Lieutenant Charles said, in his statement:

"First I would like to express my appreciation for my release to my family. Secondly, I would like to thank the Vietnamese people for the humane treatment and generosity they have shown me. Finally, I would like to say that I am a happy man but I cannot truly be happy until this war is terminated.

"By ending the war, people with whom I have lived feel that much suffering and hardship will end and also this will assure their return home to their loved ones, and to their loved ones they want to re-

turn."

Lieutenant Gartley's statement said:

"I was shot down Aug. 17, 1968. News of this release came as a complete surprise to me. I feel this is a unique and very emotional situation. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people and Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and attendant camp authorities for the kindnesses they have shown me since my capture.

Caution and Laughter

"I am of course elated at the prospect of regaining my freedom, but at the same time I realize that as long as this conflict continues for the people of Vietnam, their suffering will continue, much dissension and unrest in the United States will continue, more pilots will be killed or captured and my many friends who are now in detention camps will be unable to go home. I cannot be truly happy until they come home, too. I plan to make every effort for their rapid repatriation."

North Vietnam announced on Sept. 2 that it would free the prisoners and the same day, in Paris, Mrs. Weiss and the committee co-chairman, David Dellinger, announced that they would escort them home. Later Hanoi invited one family member of each prisoner to greet them; Major Elias's father, Barney, said he was unable to make the trip.

At the meal here, all three men looked relaxed and well. Mrs. Weiss cautioned Lieutenant Gartley about the food. "Don't forget, this is rich stuff—don't eat something you can't handle," she said, pointing to an array of Vietnamese sweetmeats and dishes. The lieutenant laughed.

"Are you trying to tell me how to acclimatize myself after four years here?" he asked. "Honey, I can teach you things." He partook of spring rolls and a plate of pork with cabbage.