

Another drum sound. It was 11:00. The collegian said that it was now the siesta hour. I tried to take a nap, but did not succeed. The young college kid slept soundly. Another drum sound at 1:00PM. That meant it was the end of siesta.

3:30PM: Supper time. And was last drum sound at 9:00PM for bedtime. Very tired and boring hours, both day and night.

October 10: Just one week of imprisonment. Two guards asked me to get out immediately after breakfast. I expected an interrogation. The Cheekbone, a South Vietnam Revolutionary Government Officer and an interpreter were waiting for me in an office. They were the same people who arrested me. I was ordered to sit down on a chair. On the desk I saw broken pieces of glasses assembled together. I guessed he or another person hit his hand during a previous interrogation.

The Cheekbone stared at me. I stared at him. I saw some seven points written in Vietnamese on the pad. He tried to collect some information from me.

The first questions were: my name, date of birth, address, position. I gave my name and date of birth, Saigon address, economic minister, and No. 2 person in the South Korean Embassy in Saigon.

The second question was: "Why were you arrested?" I told him, "I don't know."

I did not know Vietnamese, but the interpreter's language indicated no due respect for me, so I responded to him in the same manner.

He tried to control his emotion, but lost his temper.

The he explained: South Korea had sent the Tiger division, White Horse division, Blue Dragon brigade to Vietnam to kill so many innocent Vietnamese. You will be executed. He paused for a few minutes. Then he said: "we'll forgive your past sins if you join the new Democratic Progressive Movement."

He also told me that the U.S. had a reactionary government, but it had many good people who sympathized with us.

I told him:

"I'm protected by the Vienna Accord of 1961 which was signed by the UN member nations and nonmember nations as well. All the diplomats are privileged to be exempted from any domestic laws and regulations. Throughout diplomatic history over the past 130 years, I have not yet seen this kind of interrogation. You violated the Vienna Agreement. You should know unwritten law as well."

The interpreter did not understand the term "unwritten law." So I wrote in Chinese characters and in English "common law." Then he understood the word.

The Cheekbone said that new Vietnam government did not have diplomatic relations with South Korea, so that I could not use the Vienna accord. He emphasized the fact that South Korea's Park Chung Hee sent so many troops to kill us as a puppet of the U.S. imperialists. According to him, South Korea was a war criminal, and therefore I should be executed.

I explained diplomatic privileges regardless of diplomatic relations. Two nations at war with each other should return the enemy country's diplomats via a third nation, and I quoted the relations between the U.S. and South Vietnam's Revolutionary Government. Ambassador Dinh Va Chi could be arrested by the U.S. Government, because there were no diplomatic ties between the U.S. and the South Vietnam Revolutionary Government. He was in New York at that time.

I tried to make them see the future international reputation of the new South Vietnam. I told him: "I will make a statement about the new South Vietnam treatment of foreign diplomats when I return to Korea. I will write a report to the UN authorities." I suggested to him, "You had better treat me as a diplomat for your own benefit." And I asked him to contact the UN about my diplomatic status.

I stopped at that moment, and asked the interpreter to do his job.

I knew the new South Vietnam government's strong desire to join the UN organizations, and the Cheekbone was sensitive to my statement.

He told me, "We do not need to ask the UN." I quickly realized his voice softened. He was embarrassed. I educated him on international affairs and diplomacy--Asian, Latin American, and African nations experienced political changes from non-communism to communism and vice versa. Diplomats in the turbulent nations had been protected. New regimes should arrange the safe return of diplomats to their country of origin. Cambodia's Lon Nol allowed the safe return of North Korean diplomats and People's Republic of China diplomats to their home countries. My situation was the same as the North Korean diplomat in Phnompenh under Lon Nol's regime.

The Cheekbone said: "Cambodia is Cambodia. Vietnam is Vietnam. You will be executed."

I stared at him.

"You will kill me. Kill me. Don't threaten me." Right away I did not like my own statement, so I continued: "When you kill me, you should let the international court review my case." I protected my life with an "international court" idea.

He concluded the session at that point. "Today this is enough. We will have the second session soon." His eyes were filled with burning anger towards me.

They took me to the prison office and one guard brought me to my cell.

The college student asked me what had happened. I explained our question-and-answer session. He worried about my answers because there was no lawyer protecting my legal and civil rights, and they did not care about international law and diplomacy. They could kill me if I did not please them.

I was concerned about North Vietnamese agents. They interrogated South Korean residents before my imprisonment. They threatened South Koreans, and they appeared at various apartments and hotels.

I was born and raised in North Korea as a son of a small farmer. After World War Two, I escaped from North Korea in order to find freedom in South Korea. Then I entered the Korean Military Academy in order to protect freedom in South Korea. During the Korean War, I was a company commander in the front line and I was wounded. I recovered and returned to the war as a company commander and later a battalion commander.

I had to die when the time came. My determination to kill myself was unshaken. Tense days and night came and went.

October 15. Two in the morning. I could not sleep. I kneeled down and started meditating. I could see my own death a few steps away. The thought of death relieved me of fear and anxiety. Meditation put me at ease. I could hear bells ringing as I meditated. I completed my meditation and got up.

Whenever I had pain, I started to meditate. The college student followed my meditation as if I were some kind of a yogi.

October 18. All the prisoners were asked to dress up for a picture-taking session. I tried to resist picture-taking and fingerprinting sessions. But I accepted them. In the past, fingerprinting was required for ID purposes. When I first went to the U.S. for training I was fingerprinted.

This prison might justify execution when I resisted fingerprinting. Or they could somehow do the fingerprinting. They might also need it when I died in that prison. Picture-taking was no problem, because I had had so many pictures taken for ID's in South Vietnam. There was no meaningful resistance against it. I was a prisoner. It was a fact, even though the imprisonment was illegal.

I decided not to fight with those people. Rather I would avoid any unnecessary fight. I should fight for our national interest.

Strange faces came into my cell beginning on October 20. They were the Cheekbone's men. I expected a second interrogation.

October 26. I looked at words in an English dictionary in order to relax. I could not concentrate on any single word. The cheekbone and new North Korean agents kept harassing me continuously.

Two months elapsed, but no second interrogation occurred. I was wondering why.

December 6. I was surprised to receive a 10 kg package from the President of the Korean Association in Saigon that included tooth paste, tooth brush, cookies, fruits, Vitamin A, dried shrimp, sugar, dried bananas, peanuts, dried beef, cigarettes, matches, underwear, and medicine.

It was known that political prisoners were not allowed to receive gifts from the outside. That is why that meant something to me. Probably the international Red Cross or the French Government did something for me. It was only a guess. There was no way of knowing.

I was quite happy. I felt relieved.

The probability of being kidnapped and taken to North Korea was now greatly reduced. I could relax and enjoy the package.

I asked the college student to send cookies to the Korean kid in cell #7 on the fourth floor. A Korean man with a four year old kid were imprisoned and kept in that cell. I did not recognize his name, Chiwon, because he lived outside Saigon. I knew he was kept in that prison. The college student had once interpreted for Chiwon, and knew Chiwon's situation well. He had married a Vietnamese woman. He was a civil engineer. He had been imprisoned since July. The college student had found a guard who could deliver the cookies to the Korean kid.

November and December 1975. It was rather chilly. The coldest in 60 years.

The college student had been arrested on a bus, so he did not have any change of clothes and could not protect himself against the cold weather. He did not receive any gifts from the outside. I let him share my things. I gave him underwear, socks, a shirt, and food.

December 25. I woke up. It was cold. It was my wife's birthday. She had left Saigon with our four children on April 6. Where could they be? Were they in Bangkok? Their first destination was Bangkok. My wife told me on the eve of the family departure: "You are not scared of anything. I am insecure because you will remain here. Brave men are great, but do act prudently. Take care of yourself. You should remember your wife and four children."

April 6. Morning. She repeated the same words and left Saigon. She always wanted me to be an honest man, a man of integrity, loyal to his homeland. She always tried to control and tone down my bold actions.

Was she in Seoul or Bangkok? What about the children's schooling? What would she do on her birthday? No celebration because of my imprisonment in Vietnam? Could she take care of herself? I just hoped they were well.

December 31. President Lee sent me a 15 kg package. I again sent a few things to the Korean kid.

1975 was over. 1976 was starting.

Nothing changed. The same prison life--boring, tired, hopeless, slow-pace.

January 29, 1976. Eight o'clock in the morning. Water carrying job was just finished. Breakfast was just beginning. A child's song broke the quiet of prison life. It was strange because a young child's singing was tolerated by the prison authorities. His singing was accepted by all. Some guards might think it was illegal, but they were listening too. No one stopped the Korean kid's singing. The singing continued. A Vietnamese song, another Vietnamese song. That was all. It meant their freedom.

I must be the only Korean in the prison after Chiwon and his child left. I felt lonely all of a sudden.

February 3. My youngest son's 11th birthday.

February 5. My second son's 15th birthday.

I sent them a "happy birthday" from my heart.

February 11. General Thau U Bai, South Vietnam's Wahau religion, came to our cell.

He had been detained with first Prime Minister Wen Van Rok under the Thieu administration, Buddhist leader Thic Chi Kwang, Ankwang faction, another Buddhist leader Thic Tham Chaw, Safa religion, Catholic Father Hoang Quin, North Vietnam refugee faction, another catholic father, Thrau Hu Than, who organized massive demonstrations against President Thieu's leadership, former Vice Premier Thau Van Thieu, the nationalist party leader, and others. He told me they were weak and might not live very long, and there was no Korean there. Many detainees were sent to many different prisons.

He had been a political prisoner since the French colonial days. He was not a stranger to prison life. He had a small briefcase which contained every necessity. Shaving tools were there. Cash was there. I could understand why he carried his shaving equipment with him.

Haircut every 37 days, and for that very quick haircut one needed his own razor blade. Long hair and beards got in the way of eating and drinking, therefore Gen. Bai carried a razor blade in a secret place which the prison authorities could not see. He told me a razor blade could be used for one to five years. He could sharpen it on concrete wall or floor, or on his own hands.

He was born in 1926. He finished one year and 26 days of educations. He, like President Abraham Lincoln, studied himself and General Commander of Wahau religious sector. His anti-French and anti-Diem movements were well known. He

supported the Thieu administration in early stage and later opposed it. Thieu was closer to Senator Sang, an American-educated Wahau leader. General Bai asked his followers to cut fingers in a protest movement against Thieu who was corrupt, authoritarian and anti-democratic. He certainly cut Thieu's popularity.

He used to have many names during the anti-French and anti-Diem movements, one of which was Haitop. The Vietnamese therefore called him Gen. Haitop.\*

Gen. Haitop, like many old Chinese leaders, knew magic with 14 grasses named Youbaisai which would foresee a person's future, tomorrow's events. It was mythical. He spent one to three hours for Youbaisai. I just watched him doing his magic. He also predicted the future with flying bird's wing.

The height of the prison cell on the 4th floor of building A was 3.50 meters. When the iron bar was closed completely, it blocked sunlight to the cell. There were two walls to the outside. The cell was always dark or dim. Between the two walls, sparrows made a nest. Feathers came to our cell. We could hear the baby birds' singing.

The prison kept electric lights on all night. About 4:30 in the morning, a sparrow came to our cell, sat on my mosquito net and then on Gen. Bai's, and then flew away.

When they awoke at 5:00, I told Gen. Bai and the student about the sparrow. Gen. Haitop paid the greatest attention to the sparrow story. He asked me: "In which direction the bird flew, in which direction the bird sat on the mosquito net..."

He concluded there would be good news for me. He did Youbaisa for me. The Youbaisai again indicated great news for me. He illustrated the great news would be my wife's coming to the prison with the International Red Cross members and with many presents. He said I would eventually be released from the prison.

Three inmates were better than two. More talks and jokes made the cell a less boring and tiresome place. But it was still hell.

Ho Chi Minh once said in his biography: "One day in the prison is 1,000 years outside the prison." It was exaggerated. To me, one day in the prison was equivalent to 100 days outside the prison. If I was lucky, one day inside was equivalent to 10 days outside.

February 28. President Lee sent me the third gift package of 10 kg. Items were the same as the first and second ones. Gen. Haitop comment: "Well, you don't have your wife, but it is a good day for you, isn't it?"

Gen. Haitom and the college student did not receive any outside gifts, so they shared my foods and medicines, 9 kg was food. Three inmates could eat

them all in three to five days. So we had to save the food for 30-day use. The outside gift was made possible once a month. We never made it for 30 days. Before 25 days, we ate them all.

The college kid was transferred to the new building on March 24. The building A supervisor made a decision for him. He would be transferred with other inmates in building A under a reclassification plan of prisoners. We became friends. Departing was not easy for us. I gave him vitamins, toothpaste and soap when he left our cell.

After his departure, I could not enjoy talking with Gen. Haitop because he could not speak English.

I spent 6 months with the college student. He was born in Hongha Delta. His father was a captain of a ship in North Vietnam, escaped to South, and settled in Saigon. Catholic, and anti-communist, family background.

His brother was a South Vietnamese Army Lieutenant who had battlefield experiences. After the demise of South Vietnam, he returned home. Last July he was called for a training session by new communist government. Since then, no one knew of his whereabouts.

The college kid attempted to organize guerrillas against new communist government. He and his group were heading to the jungle. He was arrested inside a bus. He offered me much information about the prison. He knew many people in the prison.

My Vietnamese was poor, so I acted in order to communicate with Gen. Haitop. Sometimes I had to draw pictures. We were improving as days and night were passing through the cell.

Outside gift was not available in March, April and May. I gave up on the gift. I figure out that someone blocked it here, or the net work between Seoul and Saigon was broken.

May 29. It was my third son's birthday. He was 13. My Vietnam life had begun with him. When I prepared to my new duty of military attache to the Saigon Embassy, he was born. Then I completed my regiment commander's duty and started my new career in the Korean Foreign Affairs Department. My wife and I had the education necessary for military attache. The day after the completion of the training session, he was born. When he was 100 days old, we left Kimpo Airport, Seoul for Saigon. That was my first step as a diplomat. My last and third assignment was made on April 6, 1973. I spent 9 years and 5 months in Vietnam. Including my prison life, it could be 10 years and 7 months. South Vietnam fell to the communists one year and one month before.

Ten years were long enough to change a mountain to a river or vice versa. I was happy as a diplomat. My family enjoyed the diplomat's family life as well. Life had its ups and downs. Now, I was wandering in death valley. No hope, dark and dim cell. Unknown birds broke the quietness of the prison

night. I was curious about the bird, "sad" bird to me. The college kid and Gen. Haitop did not know it.

The bird's singing was like a cuckoo's, but not exactly. Sadness, despair, and pain could characterize the bird. I called him the "sad bird." At dawn, the birds left the area. Drumming beat the bird. New morning arrived.

At 5:00, all inmates should sit on their mats. The prison officer and guards opened a small pane to check heads. If inmates were not on the mats, the punishment was severe. One morning an inmate in cell #5 on the 4th floor just finished urinating when they visited the cell. The punishment was a 24-hour handcuff. All inmates should sit straight up when the "roll call" officers came. Handcuffed eating, urinating, and sleeping for 24 hours was a severe penalty.

Gen. Haitop said, "It is too much", when a guard brought the news to us. After the roll-call, it was water time. When we carried water, all other cells were completely closed. No communication among inmates in other cells was allowed.

The good guards allowed 3 bucketfuls of water. The bad guys allowed one bucketful of water. Buckets were made by the prison inmates. It was rough, defeted and leaking. While we carried water, one guard was watching at the water tank area, another was at our cell, and probably someone was also watching us from outside. The water tank was located in a prison cell.

Cell #2 prisoners started the water carrying and cell #1 prisoners completed the water carrying.

I wore an undershirt and long pants whenever I carried water. Gen. Haitom only wore underwear. He had a quick shower before carrying water to the cell. He poured two buckets of water over his head. I needed more showers than he did, but I followed the prison rule. The guard warned Gen. Haitop not to do it, but the Gen. did not care. The guards were loyal inmates selected by the prison officers. He humilitated them. I did the same.

When we asked their pardon, we acted as the most humiliating individuals. They humiliated us. General Haitop was below the third class prisoner--guard.

After water job, we did laundry without soap. There was no soap supply to the prisoners. We just made our clothes wet and spread them out in the cell. Then the foul smell amost made us vomit.

6:30 in the morning was the starving time. Breakfast started at 8:00 or 9:00. Two guards distributed drinking water in a bucket from cell #1. Each prisoner got 1 liter of water. Meals and soups would arrive at 9:00. Each prisoner received meals and soups in the hallway and returned to the cell one by one. Then the guards locked up the gate. They moved to the next cell. Some guards watched our eating through the small pane.

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After breakfast, we cleaned the dishes. Soon the siesta drum informed us it was 11:00. At 1:00 there was a wake-up drum. Between 2:00 and 3:00, drinking water was supplied. Between 3:00 and 4:00, supper was supplied.

We cleaned the dishes. Another drumming. We had free 5 hours until bed time at 9:00. That's the last drum. I missed the sunlight. In April, six months of imprisonment made me miss the sunshine.

He believed that further imprisonment would mean death. His Wahau head might also be dead in the not too distant future. I didn't expect them to live long here in the prison or outside of the prison. They could remain in the Vietnam history as Wahau martyrs. I advised him not to change his political beliefs and to prepare for martyrdom with the Wahau head. I simply said: "How long do you think you will live?"

He was not sure for martyrdom. I humiliated him. He sat on the mat and did Youbaissau. He was leaning toward freedom. Freedom with strings attached. In spite of my persuasive efforts, he was leaning toward living. He made an excuse. He told me he would go to Paris with his family where his daughter was studying. Freedom in France could justify his changed beliefs. It was his choice; not my choice. I gave up my attempts at persuasion. I did not blame him for changing his mind. He missed his one-year old baby in his hometown.

He was determined to escape from Vietnam after earning the trust of the Communists.

Whatever he used to justify his decision, changing his beliefs was not the most honorable thing to do.

September 15. Night. I finally gave up on him. It should be his decision, not mine. I shouldn't overdo it, anyway. Rather, I wanted to maintain the good friendship we had built over the past seven months. We shared our lives. He was a good man, even though he changed his political beliefs. I wished him the best of luck.

September 16. The prison officer escorted General Haitop to the office. Two hours later, he returned to the cell with an envelope, five sheets of paper, and one ballpoint pen. He promised the police he would join the people's revolution after regretting his past sins. He was allowed to write a letter to his family. The envelope, paper, and pen were for the letter.

I asked him whether all Wahau leaders changed their minds. He said, "Yes." One year and four months later, I realized he had lied. The Wahau head and General Haitop changed their minds. The Second Wahau man and General Haitop's Deputy did not change their minds. The second men did not surrender. Top men did surrender. How could we explain two against two? How did the top men face their deputies?

During siesta, he didn't sleep, but did write a letter to his family on the mat. He gave the letter to the prison officer during the drinking water distribution hour in the afternoon.

He did not receive any gift from his family, friends, or anyone. He did not receive a letter from anyone in the past 15 months. He agonized over his decision, but he seemed happy to see his family and to eat what he liked to. I tried not to see him.

September 24. 8:30 a.m. The prison officer and one guard opened the bar and asked him to dress up. He dressed in the traditional Vietnamese black and wore vinyl sandals. He was escorted somewhere.

I extended my thoughts to my younger days. In a Seoul street, taffy merchants were selling long taffies. I wanted two long taffies.

Lunar New Year's day forty-two years ago. My aunt called me. I ran to her from the playground. She gave me a long sesame seed-coated taffy. I told her I wanted a long taffy; not sesame seed-coated. She told me: "You don't know what is good for you." I was then very young. I didn't know what was good then. She gave our New Year's Day presents to her other nephews and nieces.

I did not know why I recalled that memory. Why didn't I accept the sesame-seed coated taffy? Useless to recall that kind of memory. I was so hungry I could relive it.

Drumming for sleeping. Another useless day was ending. I rolled down the mat and set up a mosquito net. I was ready to sleep. The sad bird was near our cell.

September 13. 8:00 a.m. A guard opened the small pane and threw a newspaper-wrapped thing through it. We unwrapped it and found thick salt. The guard sent it out of compassion. We deserved his sympathy. We were really weak.

We thanked the guard from our hearts. He closed the pane and slipped way from our cell. There were some good human beings in the prison.

For the first time, I appreciated salt. How precious the salt was! Every other day, we took five small salts with our meals. Meals were better with salt.

September 14. Afternoon. General Haitop was called for a conference with a police captain. He was persuaded to support the new regime. The 70-year-old man who was head of Wahau Sector and other leaders were there. "Fifteen months imprisonment could be enough to change any human mind. All were sickmen," said General Haitop.

"The 50-year-old police captain threatened and appealed to Wahau leaders: if they were not changing their minds, then life long imprisonment was their punishment. If they were supportive of the new regime, they would be freed and treated well. Their task was to persuade Wahau guerrilla members to give up their fight against the Communists. The guerrillas were in the jungle. So they should make flyers containing propaganda for the new regime. They should broadcast to their Wahau members on their new stance. The Police Captain emphasized "human reform" to the Wahau leadership group," said General Haitop.

The Police Captain set the next meeting for September 16 which would decide which they chose: to remain in the prison for an indefinite period of time or go free and create propaganda for the new regime.

He faced the pain of decision-making. He was an anti-Communist, but he could not long endure the prison life. His clear ideology was not well matched by his unclear view on life and death.

The second prisoner who was called for punishment was General Haitop. He wore his best, black Vietnamese, dress and went to the office. The Police Captain shouted at General Haitop. I could hear his angry words. He returned to the cell in seven minutes. He was not handcuffed; maybe he was still treated differently. The Police Captain was like the General in the prison. General Haitop was nothing in the prison.

I asked him what had happened. He said: "Dirty, dirty." He didn't want to talk about it.

September 9, 1967. Morning. No water in the water tank. We had to go downstairs to get water. We carried two water containers in our two hands, each 13 kg. when full of water. I could not control myself and slipped on the steps on the way to our cell. Water wetted the steps and floor. The guards said in Vietnamese: "You're dumb! Why didn't you carry two-thirds of the water container!"

I later knew what they said.

I carried the two-thirds of water in the container to our cell. General Haitop helped and consoled me. My elbow was bleeding.

I looked at my body. Sadness, sorrow.

I was 82 Kg when Saigon fell to the Communists. At that time, my waist measured 38 inches.

When I was arrested, I was 76 Kg, 36 inches. Between Saigon's fall and my arrest, I tried to protect Koreans in Saigon against the North Koreans' infiltration. Now I weighed 52 Kg., and measured 28 inches. I could not handle two water containers. Who knew? My waistline might go down to 18 inches.

General Haitop told me that a man could not walk if he were continually undernourished. Some could only sit down on the floor and only move their hands. I needed spiritual toughness. Mental toughness was not enough to carry up to 36 Kgs. My hands were OK, but my legs could not bear the weight.

I might crawl someday. I might be a vegetable someday. General Haitop told me when I was reaching 40 Kg.

I calculated six to seven months to reach 40 Kg. I could survive another six to seven months.

The steel door was opened. Breakfast. One bowl of rice and one bowl of pumpkin soup. Prisoners had one to three fish meals each week. Rice was mixed with dirt. The meals made us hungry in a few minutes.

After suppertime, I had a strong desire to eat anything -- roots of trees, blades of grass, food meant for pigs. Pigs ate better than prisoners. I thought about it.

The "sad" birds also made the prisoners sad.

His cheekbones were more pronounced, and his eyes were sunken. Only bones and skin composed his body. He looked at his body and exclaimed, "I'm dead. I'm already a dead body." He sighed.

He said that he had been imprisoned so many times since the French rule, and he had been defended by lawyers at the court and had received weekly outside gifts to sustain his life. He further added that the Communist prison was the worst because lifelong imprisonment was virtually guaranteed without trial. He had had hope of freedom, but under the new Communist rule he had no hope of freedom.

He tried to overcome painful prison life. The dim cell turned into darkness after the sunset. Then he set the mosquito net and inside the net he prayed in the Wahau religious way.

After the prayer, he did Youbaisau and got often ill divination signs. He was quiet in meditation.

September 5, 1976. Sunday. 6:30 p.m. Emergency situation in cell #7 on the fourth floor of Building A.

"Report to the prison officer!"

Each cell should relay the "report" to the next cell. Some prisoners were faint. Cholera, dysentery, and epidemics were in the prison. Emergency situation should be reported to the prison authorities.

General Haitop got up and shouted the "Report" -- Report to the Prison Officer. I had never heard his shouting like that before. He repeated it several times.

Prisoners in other cells shoutted te report. No guard or officer arrived. So they freed their anger and discontent. Shouting! Shouting! Shouting in all of the cells.

One started to laugh, "Ha! Ha! Ha!" Then, some laughed and laughed. And then, they shouted again.

After ten minutes, their shouting lost power and strength. Some still laughed and shouted like frogs in the flooding season.

Suddenly, some knocked the iron bar hard. The Cell #1 on the fourth floor then was quieted. Then the prison officer shouted: "Shut up, you slobs!"

He was angry. All were quiet.

The prison officer was there on time, but tried to catch the ill-behaved prisoenrs. Inmates never knew prison officers were outside the bar. The Police Captainnn, Chief Officer of the AB Building, was checking each cell.

The emergency patient or situation was forgotten.

News and unfavorable news to the U.S. and Western democracies from the UN. International news were mainly for attacking the United States and South Korea.

I knew the North Korean newspapers. The People and Saigon Liberation were not very different from the North Korean newspapers. But I gained some insights how the new Communist regime viewed the U.S. and Korea and its foreign policy making. I asked Gen. Haitop to translate news on Korea first, on the UN and the U.S., and France next. I really was a beneficiary out of the two newspapers. I counterused the newspapers. It was great.

I could resume diary writing on September 234. Two notebooks and two ballpoint pens were for my diary. Diary writing was prohibited in the prison, so I had to be awfully careful in contents of the diary. I pretended to spell English words in the diary. I did not show diary to Gen. Haitop. He thought I was using notebook for my English study. The Prison authorities might do "surprise attack" to my cell and inspect everything, including my notebook. So I could not contain anything related to South Korean security, my personal life and the prison. I was conscious of not writing anything against the Communist regime. I intentionally messed up some pages the diary was really short.

I ate well. Then, I could study English. I exercised everyday--running on the same spot, push-ups, work out in the morning and afternoon.

Two officer and three guards inspected one byu one with suspicion of secret letter. They looked into kimchi bottle, pads, ballpoint pen...everything. They spread out shirts and underwer, too. Fifteen minutes inspection. Two guards helped me carry the stuff to my cell. Each guy got a pack of cigarettes from me. The bar was closed.

I was relieved. I sighed like he was in the morning. He said, "You have a lot, a lot."

We ate a lot. Taffy, meat, Kimchi, cookies, fruits. Then, we brushed teeth. How nice it was! Last four months, we brushed with water. WE felt fresh after brushing teeth with toothpaste.

I began writing diary in early days. When I was prisoned, the Cheekbone took everything out of me except a small notebook and an English dicitonary. I could memo major events in thenotebook. In order toconfuse the Vietnamese officers, I made it look like an English spelling notebook. April 10 was the last space for the diary. So I could not continue diary since. I sued empty space of packages for the calendar, and recording of sunbathing and harcut as such.

All the prisoners received two newspapers in Vietnamese: one was People published by the North Vietnam Labor Party and Saigon Liberation published by the South Vietnam Labor Party. The newspapers were passed around from one ell to another. Delivery of newspapers was done by the guards under the supervision of the prison officer. Teh newspaper purpose was brainwashing the prisoners for the new regime.

I didn't know Vietnamese, so I could not read thenewspapers. Evwn if I knew Vietnamese, I didn't need to read those newspapers, because the Communists did not have freedom of the press and they distroted the truth and fact. They all lied. Newspapers were used for lying. Only things I could trust in the newspapers were weather news and movie direcotry.

But I just gained three benefits. One was using empty space for my diary, English spelling exercises and drawing pictures to communicate the Gen Haitop. In other words the empty space of the newspapers was my notebook.

Second was using thenewspapers for toolet tissues. We should returna ll thenewspapers to the guard who should pass them to next cell. I and the college kid did return them all, but Gen Haitop returned all except one or two. The guards did not pay attention for the missing newspapers. We used the: "missing" newspapers for tissues. We knew how to survive and to behave intheprison. He was a veteran prisoner. Once I warned him, he told me. "Don't worry! It will not be bad." Thepunishment was handcuff for 24 hours, once caught. Gen Haitophid the newpapers under his mat. The guards did not notice missing papers. He was confident to continue hiding some newspapers.

Third was getting information on internaitonal affairs. the newspapers' last pages were devoted to internaitonal news quoting Cuban newspapers, Japanese Communist Party papers, Akahada North Korean newspapers, Labor News and Central

hair made him look like a dignified person. The college kid misidentified him as the prison administrator. He did not show his rank, because he ws in civilian clothes. He was a police captain. Gen. Haitop and i identified him so long the the Prison Administrator.

I was surprised to see him. Such a high ranking officer's coming meant something. I quickly guessed that they might try to change my political belief like Gen. Haitop. Well, they succeeded to change Gen. Haitop's mind. They might certainly attempt to change mine. They might use threat, appeasement and other means. I quickly set my mind not to change, and followed them. In the office, I was shocked to see something. There were two 50 kg packages from President Lee Sune Hong, I really didn't extpect that size of gifts to me.

The packages indicated my name in English and a list of contained goods was typewritten. The sender was President Lee Sune Hong.. I realized that he did not leave Saigon. The last package on February 28 was 10 kg. Could you imagine 50 kg, 5 times bigger than the last mnornal package? The contained goods were:

|                                       |             |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| ramyon                                | 6 packages  |
| dried rice                            | 5 kg        |
| kimchi                                | 1 bottle    |
| cucumber kimchi                       | 1 bottle    |
| beef boiledin soy soauce              | 4 kg        |
| ham and sausage°                      | 1 bottle    |
| thick soypast mixed with red peppers  | 1 bottle    |
| sesame salt                           | 1 bottle    |
| toast                                 | 4 kg        |
| candies and cookies                   | 2 kg        |
| sugar                                 | 2 kg        |
| taffy                                 | 1 kg.5 kg   |
| dried banana                          | 1 kg        |
| various canned meats (beef ham, fish) | 10 kg       |
| dried fish                            | 1.5 kg      |
| milk                                  | 5 cans      |
| oranges                               | 20          |
| small apples                          | 1 package   |
| toothpaste                            | 3           |
| powdered laundry soap                 | 1 kg        |
| solid soap                            | 4           |
| face soap                             | 3           |
| shirt                                 |             |
| underwear                             | 2           |
| stomach medicine                      | 1 bottle    |
| vinly sandal                          | 1 pair      |
| vitamins                              | 160 tablets |
| chocolate mixed with vitamin          | 200 gr      |
| notebook                              | 2           |
| ballpoint pen                         | 2           |
| cigarette                             | 1 doz       |
| matches                               | 5           |
| envelope                              | 20          |
| stamps                                | 30          |

Two hours later, he returned to the cell. The guard closed the bar, and he and I remained in the cell again. He stared at me, and signed. To his right was a straw bag. To his left, a plastic water container.

"I received the gifts," he said.

he took out the items from the Vietnam straw bag. All the items were in vinyl bags--three chickens seasoned and baked; 2 kg of sugar; soap; toothpaste; toothbrush; towel; 3 liters of soy source in a plastic container; cooked sticky rice, 2 kg; Vietnamese folk medicine for all purposes; 4 kg fruit. He displayed them on the concrete floor.

He suggested that we eat. I chewed a piece of chicken. It was good. Tasteful in a mysterious way. The best chicken I had ever tasted. I could not express the taste of that chicken in writing.

Gen. Haitop exclaimed, "It really tastes good." He picked a chicken liver, and gave it to me. He took care of his Korean friend. When I finished eating, I felt I became once again a normal human being. My brain seemed to work well.

He explained how he met his family and received a gift package.

His letter was written on September 16 and had not been mailed. It was hand delivered by the police captain to his family at Longsuen, the Mekong River area. His wife received the letter and message from the police captain. She could see her husband, Gen. Haitop, at 8 p.m., September 24, in the prison office, and bring some gifts and food for him. She left Langsuen by bus with her father and baby son, just one year old, and some food, on September 23. The next day, they arrived in Saigon. They came to the prison on time. His wife was crying. His 70 year old father-in-law comforted his wife, and his one year old son was in his arms. They could not talk about private affairs because the police captain was with them, and could only talk about their livelihood and relatives.

Gen. Haitop would have a short training session with the police captain, and would remain a trainee confined to the prison-like setting. He would be released from the Chiwa prison.

Since his letter was written only eight days before, he didn't expect that kind of arrangement. He was really surprised. He expected his release in two or three weeks.

Two or three weeks in the prison was not certainly short. After next two or three weeks, I would remain alone, in a solitary cell. Chicken, sugar and fruit, extended my life for about two months. How could I endure hunger, loneliness and illness? I tried to sleep, but the drum let us know the ending of the siesta hour.

Three p.m. Supper was distributed a bit earlier to us. When we started to eat, the head of Building A and B with guards arrived at our cell and asked me to get out of the cell. The head officer looked about 50 years old. His white

response. I sang "Mokpo's Tear," and then a second stanza. I could not remember lyrics, so I used the tune. My own lyrics.

Midnight, crescent moon is coming out  
I can see you, my sweatheart,  
I only send my love to her  
Makpo's love never chages.

No response. Little space on the ceiling could block my song to the second wall or hallway. I could not talk to the Korean outside.

I failed to make contact with the crowd the next day. The guard was looking into my cell because of my singing. I made a decision to sing really loud the next day, the fifth day. I was awaiting the nap time.

After one, the crowd might appear. But the day was quiet. No crowd appeared on the fifth day.

August 24. It was strange. Almost one week, the crowd and the noise had appeared outside my cell every day.

August 25, 1976. The third sunbathing in 10 minutes. Allowed time was 15 minutes which included walking out from the cell and returning to the cell. Sometimes less than 10 minutes were given to us.

I felt better already. My skin recovered its healthy color. My fear of darkness was reduced. But I was still starved and weak. Gen. Haitop was continuously coughing. His condition was getting worse. He had been maintaining 75 kg before his imprisonment. He was then about 55 kg. He was about 1.68 meter tall.

Ten days of B1 tablets did not help any health improvement. Twelve tablets could not cure illness. The tablets were not as good as those made in the U.S., Japan, France, or South Korea. I could only comment on the way they looked, because I was not a pharmacist. The tablets were probably made in the USSR, East European nations, or Vietnam. They were very small. I could not pick up the tablets with my finger. I just doubted that they effective. We were sick men. My friend was coughing, and I was weak.

August 20. I washed my handerchief in the water container. Gen. Haitop told me he had heard Korean songs. I tried to listen. Then, the singing was over. I could hear noise and I detected a crowd outside the building. Our cell was separated from the outside by a hallway, wall, another wall, or another hallway. Probably a crowd had gathered in that hallway. Sound reached us through the ceiling, because the top of the cell was somewhat open and connected to the outside. Unless the crowd shouted or spoke loudly, I could not hear exactly what they said. I tried to listen with my left ear.

Someone shouted: "Do you have outside presents?"

He asked the guard who inspected the items.

I could not hear the other's response, and I only heard the same person's words.

"I am disappointed."

He spoke Vietnamese, with a foreign accent. Then, one person said: "There is a Korean official."

I tried to let him know about my presence, so I sang a song, "Arirang." No response. So I sang another song, "Dong Sook's Song." No response. Two walls could block my songs.

A guard opened the small pane to check my cell. He heard my songs. Singing was subject to prison punishment. I would be handcuffed. He just looked at me.

The crowd and noise disappeared.

Could it be Counselor Lee? The Korean official meant a high-ranking official, a diplomat. Three diplomats had already been imprisoned. Counselor Lee and five other junior officials were in Saigon when I was arrested. Consuls Suh and Ahn had already been arrested and had disappeared, probably taken to Hanoi for the North Korean agents' interrogation. All five remaining Korean diplomats could be sent to the prison. I was just going over all the possibilities. The North Koreans might use the crowd and the noise as a pressure tactic against me. That could be my vain imagination. They might not use that kind of tactic, because they could physically threaten or torture me.

The next day, after nap time, I heard the same noise. I sang "Dong Sook's Song," because "Arirang" could be sung by some Vietnamese as well. No

wrist. She talked to the prison officer and got permission to check me. She gave me the same test as she gave Gen. Haitop. She pressed my foot with her fingers. My foot had lost its elasticity and had to be returned to its former shape. She took my blood pressure. She did not respond when I asked her about my right ear. She was not an ENT doctor.

She did not respond to my tonsilitis, hallucinations, and other symptoms.. She knew how to speak English, though.

She said that my blood pressure and lung were good. I also had beriberi, she said. She promised to send me medicine for that. She did not say anything else. She did not understand my request. She might not have liked to say anything specific because she was not a specialist. She could not provide medication for anything besides beriberi. I could not figure out her "no comment."

I thanked her. She left with the rest of the group.

The male nurse and the two guards returned to our cell with medication. Gen. Haitop got 9 white tablets and 6 small brown ones, and I got 6 small brown tablets. White tablets were for TB, and brown tablets for beriberi. We were instructed on how to take the Two B1 [brown tablets] each day.

After three days, they brought more B1 tablets for the next three days. We got 6 days worth of tablets and no more. The suicide and suicide attempts won us six days of medical care. But sunbathing was allowed only every two weeks. On August 11, we had a second outing. I asked Lt. Koo whether he received any answer from the French Embassy or the Consulate General. He told me to wait.

August 22. One month since I wrote a letter to the French diplomat.

No outside presents from President Lee. I doubted the prison authorities had mailed my letter to the French Embassy. Once they received my letter, they could have acknowledged the letter or sent the packages I requested. In August 1975, the South Korean Government and the French Embassy made an agreement to take care of the remaining Korean citizens and their safe return to their homeland. As the first action, the French diplomats gave us airline tickets to Seoul. The South Korean Government sent \$100,000 for that purpose to the French Embassy, we were told by Secretary Morreau.

Judging from what I knew, the French Embassy or Consulate General should have reacted to my letter. I assessed lack of response as no mailing from the prison to the French Embassy.

Lt. Koo was a good guy, but he could not make a decision by himself regarding the letter. He probably sent it to the chief administrator, and to the Cheekbone. Anyway, I was a political prisoner in an isolated building. When his supervisor said no, the letter did not go anywhere.

July 27. Seven in the morning. The prison officer came to me with one guard. We were led to the backyard of the building. It was the most beautiful sun in a tropical land. Sunlight on my body. Raindrops on the leaves of mango trees, refreshed in the morning breeze, vast blue sky, all the beautiful things!

Oh! The sunshine I had missed for 298 days. The sun was the same sun I had seen before. But, for the first time, I thanked the sunlight. I was grateful for the sun.

I took off my shirt and pants. I was exposed to the sunlight with just underwear on. My skin had several white spots due to lack of vitamin PP. Blood vessels were making their ugly appearance. I felt was going to be cured by sunlight.

A ten-minute sunbath. The guard asked me to return to my cell. Hell!

Gen. Haitop, since his arrival, had had frequent cough.. He was pale, thin, sick. Probably TB. But no medical services were available. Political prisoners must be critically ill to receive medical attention.

The only medical care was laxatives. That was the only available medicine. The prison could only take of constipation. Rat became crazed after one week of constipation and died from the clinical test.

Gen. Haitop again requested a doctor's prescription for his respiratory difficulty. It was timely, because the prison relaxed its tight "discipline."

A medical doctor was in the prison hospital. But political prisoners in Building A could not go to the hospital, an off-limit area. They could only visit the clinic in Building AB. The doctor should come to the cell.

In the first part of August, Lt. Koo opened the bar. He came with a woman doctor, a woman nurse, a male nurse, and two guards. The limited space allowed only the doctor and the woman nurse to come inside. The others stood outside the cell.

For the first time in ten months I saw a woman.

The doctor, Chinese-Vietnamese, looked 28. Mild personality. Not beautiful but good looking. She looked like an angel in the white gown. The nurse was a typical Vietnamese woman. She was beautiful in black pants and white gown. She was stout. They had brought a stethoscope and a hemodynamometer.

The doctor checked Gen. Haitop's blood pressure, listened with the stethoscope, and asked whether he felt pain when she touched his stomach and his back. She looked into his mouth. She did a thorough checkup. They spoke in Vietnamese. Later, I knew Gen. Haitop had a bad lung and beriberi.

When they were our cell, I asked her to check up with me. "Please see me too!" I talked to her in Vietnamese. I pointed to my chest, legs, ear and

July 21, 1976. 293rd day of imprisonment. I had not seen sunlight in 293 days. I was hungry and sick from malnutrition and isolation from the world. I had a choice: to wait until the last moment of life or to fight against prison life. I might not succeed, but I had to fight for my future. It was the right time. A political prisoner had been sent to the hospital. I had to use the opportunity, I might receive medicine, food, and daily necessities from them.

July 22. I asked the prison officer through a guard at the water tank. Lt. Koo listened to me: "My 294 days of imprisonment made me sick. I need medicine, food, and other daily necessities. I am a diplomat who should be protected by the UN and international law. The French Embassy might not be there, but the French Consulate General's office might still remain. They were supposed to protect me. They had provided my airfare for my return to Korea.

"I planned to write a letter to them. The prison should recognize my request."

Lt. Koo asked me to write it. I got a pad from the guard and wrote the following in English:

July 22, 1976

Honorable French Consul General:

How are you?

I need medicine, food, and other daily necessities. I list them below. Please provide them as soon as possible.

I am wondering whether secretary Morreau is still working in your office. I thank you for your care of Korean diplomats.

Rhee Dai Yong  
Minister, Korean Embassy  
Cell #2, 4th floor, Building A  
Chiwa Prison

List: integrated vitamins, ear infection medicine, antibiotics, cold medicine, shaving tools, ballpoint pen note pad, peanuts, cheese, butter, dried fish, dried beef, sugar, soy source.

Lt. Koo received the letter. No envelope. Anyway, they would read my letter. He was from North Vietnam and was liked by everyone--Gen. Haitop, guards, other inmates. He was mild-mannered, compassionate, handsome. He was a good communist.

July 24. Three guards came to our cell to pull out all the nails from the wall. Nails were there for hanging mosquito nets. It was a preventive action in order to avoid future suicide or suicide attempts. We had to use glue for mosquito nets. Glue was not strong, but the best alternative to nails.

The woman prisoners received gifts from outside twice a month. It was known that their lives were easier than men's. But a woman committed suicide. Their crying hurt me. Their sighs made me sad. Now of of them committed suicide. Women wer more "brave" than men in the fact that they committed suicide.

No sunlight. But my nails grew. I did not have a nailcutter, so I rubbed my nail on the concrete floor. Sometimes I lost flesh and bled. There was no medicine for that. Cigarettes helped me cure my fingers. The college student and Gen. Haitop advised me to use it, because tobacco leaves killed germs.

Last January. During water-carrying, the college student fell down on his knees. He was bleeding. We tried to carry him to the clinic, but the guards discouraged us. No medical care was available for that kind of bleeding. He had tried to lie down for a few days. My cigarette was the only medicine for him.

Tosilitis caused high fever, but no medicine nor medical care were available to me. I thought about killing myself. But I stopped short of it. Suicide was a weak person's solution. Whatever the pain, it could not be equal to death. Life was the most beautiful thing. I renewed my determination, "I'll overcome. Nothing is comparable to death."

I had one life to live. I had retained that life, and would continue to do so. I had to accept death as a natural thing. Until then, I had to fight against the prison difficulties.

But when I was forced to go to North Korea, I would kill myself. I should not betray my country, South Korea. Betrayal was worse than suicide.

I liked Kwanwoonjang, a Chinese general, Mr. Chung Mong Joo, a loyal scholar of the Koryo dynasty, and Mr. Min Young Wham, who killed himself because of the Japanese colonial rule.

I also remembered 19 young students who killed themselves before surrendering to the enemy.

July 17, 1976. 12:30, just before ending the siesta hour, there was loud knocking on the door of the next cell. Gen. Haitop and I awoke from the knocking. Then the knocking stopped. Then it started again.

The prison officer opened the small window. He then ran to the office. A few people carried one person out. Two people cleaned the bloody concrete floor.

A political prisoner attempted to kill himself. he hit his head on the concrete wall against a nail. The old pale political prisoner was sent to a hospital. An old man and a woman could not endure the prison life and did not see hope in their future. I sighed.

After breakfast, we cleaned the dishes. Soon the siesta drum informed us it was 11:00. At 1:00 there was a wake-up drum. Between 2:00 and 3:00, drinking water was supplied. Between 3:00 and 4:00, supper was supplied.

We cleaned the dishes. Another drumming. We had free 5 hours until bed time at 9:00. That's the last drum. I missed the sunlight. In April, six months of imprisonment made me miss the sunshine.

I looked at my white skin. I was sick. Lack of vitamin caused beriberi and hearing loss. I was half deaf. My right ear was in trouble. I could hear sparrow's song with my left ear but not with my right ear. Hallucination overtook my vision. Sometimes I saw darkness and so many stars in daylight. I also felt so many ants creeping on my body.

One night, prisoners received cucumber as a special supply. After that supper, I urinated every 15 minutes to 20 minutes. The color of the urine was white. The next morning I returned to my normal self. I felt I had lost much weight.

I was getting thinner. Blood vessels appeared more clearly. My waistline needed another hole in my belt. I had already made several holes in my belt. I used the nail from kthe wall to make holes.

Three rice bowls and soups. But I could not have bowel movement. I tried to have it every day. But it was not easy.

Diarrhea or stomach ache was my problem prior to prison life. Now both disappeared. It was "luxury" trouble. Prisoners could not experience them. Constipation was the prisoner's trouble.

Five days' constipation gave one a headache and pain in the toilet. I had to report that to the guard. Two guards escorted me to the clinic in Building AB. Building AB meant that Buildings A and B were connected. The clinic was Room #1 on the second floor of Building B. The clinic was previously used as a cell. A medical doctor was supposed to be there. But a male nurse was on duty. Once in a while, a doctor appeared in the clinic. The clinic did not have much medicine, but had laxatives. So I made several trips to the clinic. The male nurse asked me to swallow tablets with water in the clinnic. He asked me to sing on the paper whenever I visited the clinic. Nexst to the clinic were cells for women prisoners. I heard women crying and sigh on the way to the clinic, and to my cell. Sometimes it as a quiet place. Cells #2, 3, and 4 on the second floor were all occupied by women prisoners. They were wives and daughters of former South Vietnam political leaders, military officers, women employees who had attempted escape from Vietnam.

Last February. Women on the second floor of Building AB shouted. We were awakened by their loud voice, "Report to the prison officer" [in Vietnamese].

It was siesta time. I could hear their shouts from the fourth floor. I asked the college kid why. He explained the situation: "One woman committed suicide. So they reported to the prison."

### Chapter 3: The Good Days and the Bad Days of My Solitude

After eating my fill of nourishing food and some multiple vitamins, my health improved noticeably day by day. The strange spasms in my forehead and my head disappeared and the hearing in my right ear slowly returned. My strength returned and by the evening of September 26, which was less than 2 days since the care package came, my waist which had been 28 inches in the evening of September 26, had expanded to 29 inches.

In the morning of September 27, the head of cell block AB came to my cell. General Hightop and I both mistakenly thought he was the head of the whole prison.

One reason for this was that the college student had incorrectly told us this and another was that in Vietnamese both the head of a cell block and the head of the prison were called "kwandok".

The word "kwandok" means either "top man in charge" or "head of something". So the title for the top man in charge of Chihwa prison is "Chihwa prison kwandok" and the title for the head of cell block AB is "cell block AB kwandok".

Both of these titles were usually shortened to simply "kwandok". Also, because the Vietnamese police did not wear rank insignia until July 1977 one could not really tell the rank of a person by just looking at him.

The head of cell block AB was about 50 years old and had white hair so it wasn't strange to have thought he was the head of the prison. So General Hightop and I believed what the college student had told us and thought the head of cell block AB was the head of the prison.

The head of cell block AB said that he would permit me to correspond with my family and friends once a month. He told me to write a letter to the head of the Korean Association in Saigon and one to my wife in Bangkok and give them to him the next morning.

I thought of a lot of things. If I wrote about the considerable suffering I had gone through up to now, I was sure that the Vietnamese Communist officials would not send my letters.

If for this reason I didn't write about things as they really happened to me and my true thoughts and feelings, then my family would be misinformed about my iron will and my state of mind which was still sound. After thinking things out carefully, I wrote the following letter:

To my beloved Uk-Mo,

It's already been a year-and-a-half since I've been separated from you. Here in prison, I have been thinking about you taking care of the children and how much you must be suffering.

Unfortunately, I was captured on October 3 last year and was imprisoned here.

In more than 100 years of diplomatic history, there has never been a case where a high level diplomat such as a minister or an ambassador was arrested and held in a foreign prison.

This is because according to international law and international tradition, diplomats had extraterritorial rights and could not be arrested under any circumstances. Nevertheless here I am, an international diplomat being held prisoner, staining the pages of international law and tradition.

Because of the hardships of prison life, my body has become extremely weak and my weight has dropped to 54 kilos. But my mental state is very sound and has not changed a bit from what it was so please don't worry.

On September 24, I received a huge care package from the head of the Korean Association in Saigon and it has been a great help in restoring my health so don't worry about me too much. Well, I'll end here. Please make sure that the kids study hard and stay healthy.

1976 September 27  
Your husband Lee Tae-yong

I also very carefully wrote a letter to Chairman Lee Sun-Hung.

Even if the letter to my family was confiscated and not sent, it would not affect my receiving care packages. But if my letter to Chairman Lee was not passed on, it would be difficult to get care packages so I had to worry a lot about that.

Earlier, the college student and General Hightop had told me that when a prisoner sent a letter to a family member or friend who lived in Vietnam, he became entitled to receive a care package from this family member or friend. If the friend or family member then prepared a package and went to the prison guard house, the guard would accept the package and collect the envelope of the letter requesting the package so that it couldn't be used again.

Since the four care packages which I had received so far had not been received in this way, I was in a difficult position.

Now I had been authorized to write to Mr. Lee once a month and thus regularly request care packages, so I thought I must be careful not to do anything which could jeopardize this hard to obtain privilege.

In my letter to Chairman Lee, I thanked him for the special packages which I had received so far, inquired about the other Koreans living in Vietnam and honestly described my health, taking utmost care to use non-inflammatory language. Then I requested more care packages with medicine, food, daily necessities, clothing, etc. However, I did not in any way praise the Vietnamese Communists.

The following morning, September 29th, I did as the head of cell block AB had told me the day before and gave my two letters to the guard and asked him to give them to the "kwandok".

After I gave the letters to the guard at around 9:00 a.m., the head of cell block AB returned with the guard, told General Hightop to pack his things and stood by watching. His luggage was even lighter and more pathetic than the shabby knapsacks of the beggars on Chong-kye-chong street in old downtown Seoul. I gave him two packages of Ramyon noodles, two bags of dried cooked rice, four packs of cigarettes and a package of laundry soap as a parting gift.

After he packed his bag, he stepped out of the cell with his knapsack in his right hand and a plastic soy sauce bottle in his left hand, hobbled feebly after the cell chief and left.

I had no idea he would leave so suddenly. I had thought that at the earliest he would leave sometime in the middle of October.

After he left, the cell block seemed so empty and I felt like I was the only person left on a deserted island.

In order to ease the feeling of loneliness which was coming over me, I cleaned my room and the toilet area and even paced back and forth in the room but I still felt lonely.

After sleeping for a while during siesta period, I started coughing. I opened my eyes and looked in the direction of General Hightop's mat to make sure that I hadn't awakened him from a sound nap but there was no mat and no General Hightop. Only a bleak coldness hovered in the emptiness.

In the midst of this loneliness, a few days passed and it was October 2.

At around 8:00 a.m., the warden in charge of the fourth floor of cell block AB opened the metal door to the cell, came in and told me to write another set of letters to Chairman Lee and to my family for the second time since September 27. When I told him I had just written them letters some five days earlier and asked him why I was supposed to write again, he said that since September had passed and it was a new month he was having me write my October letters to my family.

I wrote one to my wife and one to Chairman Lee and gave them to the warden at about 1:00 p.m.. The letters were the same in substance as the ones I wrote on September 27. I confirmed later that these four letters, the ones I wrote on September 27 and October 2, were never delivered. Nor were they returned to me. They just disappeared in a mysterious fog and I ended up spending a long time forbidden by the Vietnamese Communist officials to write any letters to my family.

At around 8:30 a.m. on October 5, I received another care package from Chairman Lee Sun-Hung. The package weighed about 25 kilos and contained the following:

1 jar of kimchi, 1 jar of pork sausage, 1 jar of beef stewed in soy sauce, 1 jar of red pepper paste, 1 jar of fish paste, about 1 kilo of sesame seed salt, about 1 kilo of dried fish, about 1 kilo of dried bananas, about 1 kilo of sugar, 1 pair of underpants, 3 pairs of running shorts, 2 shirts made in Vietnam, 1 safety razor, 10 razor blades, about 1 kilo of sesame seed taffy, about 2 kilos of banana taffy, about 12 kilos of canned pork, beef and fish, 5 packets of condensed milk, 1 small bottle of soy sauce, a 2-month supply of multiple vitamins, about 2 kilos of vitamin enriched chocolate from China, about 1.5 kilos of candy, 1 packet of soap powder, 1 bar of facial soap, 2 packets of laundry soap, 1 carton of cigarettes and 2 fingernail clippers.

At dawn on October 12, I dreamed that it was my turn to escort President Park Chung-Hee and that we had gone to a big hotel by the sea with pounding blue waves.

In my dream at dawn on October 13, the dragon king and the king of heaven and earth had joined sides against the snake king and giant animal king and fought a desperate bloody life and death struggle. I joined in with the dragon king and the king of heaven and earth and we reaped a great victory and then I woke up.

The dream was so vivid. I thought: "Now I've dreamed everything." When the 5:00 drum sounded, I got up, pulled back the mosquito net and sat on my straw mat until roll call was over.

When my turn came to draw water and pour it into my water pot, someone came into my cell, looked around like he was doing some kind of survey, poked me in the ribs and stuffed some kind of paper in my pocket, then left like a flash.

After I finished drawing my water, I waited until they closed the door and then took out the paper, opened it up and looked at it.

Oh! It was a letter from Chairman Lee Sun-Hung of the Korean Association. I was surprised. My heart pounded.

Chairman Lee said that after trying to make contact with me for one whole year, he finally got the letter off. He asked me about my health and if I had been interrogated by any North Koreans. He asked me to write to him and let him know what I needed and he included some news about my friend Lee Chae-Sun in Seoul. He told me to be especially careful and to write back in pure Hangui (Korean script), not in Chinese, English or Arabic. He said that the people passing these letters were very worried about being found out and had instructed him that I write my reply in the blank spaces in his letter.

He also noted that Counselor Lee and five Korean diplomats who worked under him had left for Korea during the first part of May 1976.

I was pretty well acquainted with Chairman Lee but I wondered whether this was his writing style.

In order to belay such doubts, Chairman Lee had included news about my close friend Lee Chae-Sun who had been a classmate of mine at the military academy. Lee Chae-Sun, Chairman Lee and I had often met in Saigon before South Vietnam fell and had become quite close. However, this one reference in the letter did not calm my fears. If the Vietnamese or the North Koreans knew that Chae-Sun and I were friends they could have used this in a false letter.

Was this letter from Chairman Lee? How was it possible for him to contact me like this in such an isolated maximum security prison?

Was the Vietnamese Workers Party so corrupt that one of its members could have forged the letter?

If Chairman Lee hadn't written it, then who had? Did a scheming North Korean or maybe High Cheek's Korean translator write it?

If so, had they written it to try and trick me and find out about my worsening health or any changes in my state of mind and then use this as material to interrogate me a second time, blackmail me, threaten me and win me over? Did this mean High Cheeks and the North Koreans were going to interrogate me together the second time?

I really didn't know.

While I always had to pay close attention to everything that went on around me, I thought that this time I would have to be especially careful.

If it was certain that Mr. Lee had found some secret way of reaching me and this letter really was written by him, then letters two and three would be coming in the future. I thought that I must not reveal anything until everything had been completely cleared up.

After thinking about this for some time, I decided to write something brief and neutral so it wouldn't matter who received it -- High Cheeks, the North Koreans or Mr. Lee.

The letter read as follows:

I received your packages of September 24 and October 5.

I wrote letters to Lee Chae-Sun and to my wife on September 28 and October 2 and sent them through official prison channels. They didn't receive them, did they?

The food and daily necessities which you have been sending have been just what I needed. Keep sending them just as you have.

If you have any good black pen ink, could you please send some?

Could you also send some toilet paper, some stationary, a foam pillow, a notebook and some antacid and could you stick in some medicine for my liver, some athlete's foot medicine, a lot of matches and some ant poison (there are a lot of ants).

October 13  
Minister Lee Tae-Yong

P.S. Thanks to your care packages my health is improving. My waist, which was 28 inches, has increased to 31 inches. I hope you send plenty of matches.

Why don't you come and make an official visit to me around October 20? Please continue to send the vitamins.

In the afternoon of October 13, I gave this letter to the secret courier who opened the side door of my cell and quickly stuck in his hand.

On October 16 at around 8:00 a.m. the warden of the 4th floor of cell block A [sic] said that since my sentence was for three years I still had two more years of prison to go. He did not mention of what basis he said this. At first I tried to just think of it as a joke and forgot about it but then I began to think that he might have been serious and I felt uneasy.

One day of prison life was bad enough but to think that I would have to spend another two years in this hell just staring at my cell wall and sitting on my straw mat make me feel miserable and left me dumbfounded.

On this day at around 9:00 a.m., the secret courier opened the side door of the cell and dropped in another letter. When I picked it up and opened it I saw that it was in Chairman Lee's handwriting and it read:

Panduinpum 53, October 15, 12:00 midnight

To Sok-i's father, Minister Lee,

I was very happy to receive your letter dated October 23 which you wrote on the back of my letter. Your letters dated September 28 and October 2 to your wife were not received.

I will try to continue to send the medicine and food which you requested. I was very glad to hear that the care packages helped you put on weight and that your waist has gone from 28 to 31 inches.

I wondered if the suggestion that I officially visit you on Wednesday, October 28, meant that the head of Chihwa prison had given some sort of permission or if it was just something you were asking on your own. A short while ago I formally sent a request for permission to visit you to the head of the prison through the mail and I expect notification within a few days. I will also ask around here.

Mr. Suh, Mr. Ahn and Mr. Choi Ki-Sn are all fine and think only of your health. Counselor Suh is in cell block AH, the third floor, room 5, Counselor

Ahn is in room 5 and Mr. Choi is in room 1. I've been wondering if you were alone in your cell or if there is anyone with you. Please explain in detail about how your health has deteriorated.

When is your birthday? If you want to write a letter to your wife or to the Foreign Minister please just make sure that you send them when the courier who delivers my letters asks for any letters which you have written. Always tell anyone there that the letters are just for your wife. There are no North Koreans at the prison so don't worry too much... I haven't even seen any Koreans around here either lately. The Korean residents here are free to live where they want, to move about, and there have been no incidents so you can rest easy. It is possible to send letters and telegrams to Korea. In emergency situations we are reporting to the French Consulate. In closing, please take care of your health...

It is almost certain that you will be released by the end of next year so you must endure a bit more. The Korean government is making very effort to gain your release through international channels so take heart... Goodbye. Make sure you sign your name both in Hangul and in Chinese characters...

Chairman, Association of Korean Residents in Vietnam,  
Lee Sun-Hung

The first letter had shown some of this distinctive writing style but this letter further displayed the distinctive character of Chairman Lee and I felt certain that this letter was written by him. The way in which the first few sentences end in the "um" style, suddenly change to the "sumnida" style and then back to the "um" style; the playfully unfinished sentences ending with a trailing "..."; and the decisive remarks about the uncertain events of the future such as his assertion that it was "almost certain" that I would be released by the end of next year. All these things accurately displayed Chairman Lee's personality.

I was glad to confirm through this letter that Counselor Ahn and Counselor Suh were being held at the Chihwa Prison in Saigon and had not been dragged off to Hanoi. I also found out for the first time that a Korean I didn't know named Choi Ki-Sun was being confined at Chihwa prison. I also felt deeply grateful to the French government for the humane way in which the French Consulate continued to watch out for the Koreans who remained in Vietnam, a fact which was confirmed in this letter.

As mentioned above, I was certain that this letter had been written by Chairman Lee because of the writing style but I decided to still be careful and wrote:

To Chairman Lee,

The idea of the visit was mine. My birthday is November 20, 1925. As far as my health goes, I can't know for sure without a medical examination but I think that hearing in the right ear has been damaged some and either my bronchial tube or my throat, I'm not sure which, doesn't feel good. Also it

feels as though there is something wrong with my liver and occasionally it feels like there are ants crawling through all of my blood vessels. Since I put on weight the dysentery has almost cleared up and the dizziness (probably from anemia) which had been quite severe has gone away as I've eaten nourishing food. I still occasionally hear a ringing in my head and ears as though I'm having a nervous breakdown. I did have a bad case of beriberi (from lack of vitamins) but the vitamins you sent helped a lot.

Since I set my private life in order some time ago I'm not worried about anything but occasionally I do think about the problem of education costs for my children.

One day soon I hope to see your face again. When you come to visit me could you please bring a refill for a Parker 51 pen (black ink -- I have a pen but no ink) or if you can't bring that any kind of black ink pen will do. Since September 28 I have been in my cell alone. My two room-mates were both moved to some other cell, one in March and one on September 28.

October 16 a.m.  
Lee Tae-Yong

P.S. Please bring some athlete's foot medicine.

The courier showed up at around 2:00 p.m. and took my letter.

Chairman Lee's letter mentioned that I would be released for sure toward the end of next year but what was this based on? Both before and after the fall of South Vietnam there had been a lot of groundless rumors. Had Chairman Lee heard some groundless rumor and written this? Was Chairman Lee passing on such a groundless rumor? The warden of the fourth floor of cell block A had said that I wouldn't be released until two years from now. Which one was right?

I decided to take a chance and to place more weight on what Chairman Lee said. I interpreted what he said as meaning that I would be released sometime between the end of November and the end of December next year. If this didn't turn out to be the case, then I would have no choice but to sit out the two years mentioned by the guard, the two years which made me sick to think about it.

In the morning of October 22, the third letter from Chairman Lee came. It was the first time since I had been incarcerated that I had some news about my family.

The letter said that during my imprisonment my sons had continued their education without interruption and that the government had picked up the tab.

Ah, how thankful I was for my homeland. Just thinking about the president, the government officials and the citizens made me feel that even if I died now I could go in peace. Unable to stop the flow of tears I wept alone in my cell. I wiped and wiped the tears from my face with the back of my hand

but they just kept flowing.

Some time later, after I finished reading the letter through, I washed my face and put away the Teramycin for athlete's foot and skin conditions, the antacid, the liver medicine and the coffee which were sent with the letter.

After breakfast, during siesta time I took two hours to write a long report to the Korean Foreign Minister about the year I had spent so far in prison. Because of time restraints I couldn't write to Chairman Lee so I decided to write him in the evening.

The report which I sent to the Foreign Minister read as follows.

To: The Foreign Minister (Republic of Korea) 1976 October 22

A. The following is a summary of the events which transpired over the last year.

B. On September 27, 1975, feeling more and more that my personal safety was being threatened, I submitted a request to the French Embassy for refuge but because the Vietnamese revolutionary government did not recognize any extraterritorial rights for diplomatic personnel in Saigon they announced that the French embassy could no longer function as a place of refuge.

C. On September 29, I exchanged my final greetings with Secretary Shin Sang-Bum and Minister Kim in preparation for the worst.

D. On September 3, I was arrested by a group of policemen led by the Immigration Office Korea Section Chief himself (name unknown, nicknamed "High Cheeks") and I was imprisoned in cell 2 on the third [sic] floor of cell block A at Chihwa prison.

When I was arrested, the charges they read out loud were as follows: "Name: Lee Tae-Yong, Occupation: Diplomat, arrested for opposing the revolution."

E. My cellmate was a college student from Saigon who had been arrested one month earlier. His name was Jan Ban Jung.

F. At 10:30 a.m., October 10, 1975, High Cheeks, a translator, and an armed military officer (these were the three who were directly responsible for my arrest) came to Chihwa Prison and interrogated me for about 70 minutes in an interrogation room.

High Cheeks did the interrogation himself, using a translator. A gist of the interrogation follows.

1. High Cheeks

a. South Korea and Vietnam do not have diplomatic relations so the Geneva Accord does not apply to you (me). You are just a civilian.

b. (Fiercely criticizing the dispatch of Korean troops to Vietnam). You have

You have been sentenced to death by firing squad.

c. While the U.S. government is counterrevolutionary there are many Americans who believe in progressive democracy (Communism) and who have cooperated with us. If from today on you join the ranks of progressive democracy and cooperate with us we will treat you with magnanimous humanity.

d. Tell us the names of all those who came to Vietnam and worked with you.

2. Me:

a. Ambassadors and Ministers are high-level diplomats who work for the good of their country and in addition pursue international peace through international cooperation. Since the establishment of the Ambassador and Minister system, until this day there has never been any circumstance under which a Minister could be interrogated by an agency of a foreign government. This is international law. I cannot break it. Therefore I cannot answer your questions. Please understand.

b. Why can't I receive the protection of the Geneva Accord? In my current status it should be applied. Ask UN Headquarters about my status and they will confirm it.

c. When the Lon Nol right wing coup succeeded in Cambodia, many North Korean diplomatic personnel were unable to withdraw and were left in Phnom Penh. The Lon Nol government sent them safely back to North Korea according to the Geneva Accord. What is the difference according to international law between the North Korean deputy minister and me? None.

d. The U.S. and Vietnam do not have diplomatic relations at present. If just because there are no diplomatic relations between two countries it means that a country can on a whim arrest and interrogate a Minister of another country, then what would be wrong with the U.S. arresting and interrogating Vietnam's ambassador in New York, Ambassador Tien Ba Chi?

e. Firing squad! If it comes to death by firing squad, then go ahead and execute me. Only execute me after I've had a trial.

g. High Cheeks with a cold expression said: "We'll be back to interrogate you again" and left.

h. After making resolute preparations for the worst and after weeping bitter tears, I spent a quiet two months serenely meditating each day. High Cheeks didn't show up again and neither did any North Koreans.

i. Twice, once on December 6 and once on December 30, Chairman Lee sent me care packages full of food, medicine and daily necessities. Each package weighed about 25 kilos. This made me think that things would not turn out as badly as they could.

j. On February 11, 1976, Jan U Bai (nickname General Hightop) was moved into my cell.

k. On February 20, a care package weighing about 10 kilos arrived from Chairman Lee.

l. On March 25, my room-mate Jan Ban Jung was transferred to another cell.

m. On July 27, I was allowed to go out into the sun and see the sky for the first time in 281 days of captivity. After that I was permitted to go outside for the second time in August and for the third time in October (the first time was for about 15 minutes). Up to the present, I have been outside six times.

n. By September 24, my waist had shrunk to 28 inches (normally it was 38 inches and when I was put in prison it was 36 inches), and my weight dropped to about 54 kilos (normally it was 82 kilos and when I was put in prison it was 76 kilos).

o. I received two more packages of food, medicine, etc. from Chairman Lee Sun-Hung, one on September 24 and one on October 5. They weighed about 17 kilos each. My health is rapidly improving with my waist now about 31 inches and by weight about 62 kilograms.

p. On September 28, Jan U Bai was moved and I am in my cell alone now.

q. I have had minor illnesses but nothing major and my health is relatively good.

r. This last care package included nail clippers, razor blades and other things. Since mid-September my jailers have been treating me better.

s. The last letter I received said that the government had picked up the tab for my children's education. I was so overcome with gratitude for my friendship with President Park and his cabinet that I cried for the second time in prison.

t. I pray for the continued health of the president and the members of his cabinet.

From prison,  
Minister Lee Tae-Yong

Around 3:00 p.m. the courier came and picked up my first report from prison.

In the morning of September 23, while I was drawing water, one of the guards sneaked into my room and stole one of my nail clippers and some of my coffee.

On the 28th, this same guard had taken my sugar so I asked him if he had taken my clippers and coffee. He nonchalantly said he had. On the fourth floor of building A there were usually two guards. Occasionally an extra one came. They did this kind of thing regularly. Luckily I had two nail clippers and it wasn't much of a problem. Since I was receiving and sending secret letters, I thought it wise to avoid any confrontations with the guards or the

warder. I decided to just stay quiet and put up with it.

On October 25, my fourth letter came from Chairman Lee and with it some athlete's foot powder, some matches, some ointment, mosquito repellent, some diarrhea medicine, etc. I sent off a reply.

On October 30, Chairman Lee's fifth letter came. It read as follows:

September 28 (Thursday), 5:00 p.m.

Dear Minister Lee,

How have you been? Since you told me to be brief, I will just mention a few important matters. I just received your letter of the 25th. I didn't receive the letter you said you sent on the 22nd. According to Jin Ku Ho, your letter was too long and after he waited for me and I didn't come, he got scared and ripped the letter up. I hope you understand.

I have been receiving your letters without any problems. I will inform you of exactly when I can make an official visit. I was glad to hear that you have gained weight. Yesterday I received a letter permitting me to visit Mr. Ahn and Mr. Suh, and since I will be visiting them this week I will prepare a package for you. It sounds like you are getting a lot of things stolen (from your unofficial packages). I sent you three ball-point pens and 10 packs of matches. I am sending 500 grams of coffee with this letter. I'll send the cocoa letter. I didn't have time. Since the letter I sent on the 25th was returned to me I asked them to resend it so it will probably come with this letter.

I received word that \$600.00 had been sent here from Paris for the three you (\$300.00 two weeks ago and another 300 two days ago) but it hasn't arrived at the bank here yet. The official exchange rate into the new currency is 185 dong (92,500 pi in the old currency). The market rate is about five times that. Someone good is handling all fo the money so don't worry...

I am sending a total of four pages (including this letter). And I am sending the letter of the 25th. When you reply, be sure and put down the date and confirm which letters you have received. A few days ago I received a letter from my family in Seoul. It said that Counselor Suh's son went on vacation and was able to meet several times with your wife. He said that she has moved to the Sam Ho apartments. Everything is fine with your children. They are doing well at school. Instructions came from Seoul to report more often through the French Consul on how you three are doing. There were specific instructions to report about you. We work with Vice-Consul General Robert at the French Consulate.

I will write to them and send your entire letters (the ones you send to me) as reference materials. Please be sure to write a long letter to your wife. Again, goodbye.

Lee Sun-Hong

That day, instead of napping I took the whole two hours of siesta time and leaning over my straw mat I jotted down a brief return letter to Chairman Lee and I wrote the first letter that my wife in Seoul would receive from me since I was imprisoned.

October 30, 1976

To my wife,

It has already been a year and seven months since we were separated and I saw you and our children from behind as you departed from Ta San Nhut airport. Since then I have been worried about how much you must be suffering taking care of the children. You have probably heard about what happened to me up until September of last year from people who returned home so I will tell you about what has happened since.

On October 3, at the hands of an ignorant, self-righteous, backward nation which totally disregards international traditions, I was incarcerated here in Chihwa Prison in the building where the maximum security prisoners are held, cell block A, the third [sic] floor, cell 5. Since all of this was done in total cooperation with the North Koreans, I was in an extremely dangerous situation. It was even possible that I might be sent to North Korea. I firmly decided that I would take my own life if they decided to forcibly take me to North Korea and I began meditating everyday in order to set my personal life in order and to prevent any changes in heart. This period of mental testing lasted about two months which I spend in a lofty manner, not thinking even once about how hungry I was or what I wanted to eat.

Last December 6, the Vietnamese officials unexpectedly allowed Chairman Lee Sun-Hung to send me a care package and I received a package of some 10 kilos containing food, medicine for my indigestion, clothing, etc. In less than a month, on December 31, another 10 kilo package came from Chairman Lee. In view of this and various other indications from the Vietnamese officials, I came to the conclusion that chances were slim that I would be forcibly sent to North Korea. As soon as I was rescued in this way from death's door, I began to feel my hunger and slowly began to suffer from physical deprivation.

Let me say a few words about the diet here at Chihwa Prison. Last October, when I was imprisoned, everything was calculated in the old currency and each prisoner was allowed 200 piastas a day for food which wasn't bad since one kilo of beef cost 1,000 piastas. However, last November the amount of money each prisoner was allowed for food dropped to 150 piastas and in February of this year it dropped again to 100 piastas. The price of goods rose sharply with the price of beef jumping to 8,000 piastas per kilo so that the diet of the prisoners at Chihwa Prison became much worse. For staples, each inmate could have 30 kilos of rice a month which wasn't bad. Side dishes though consisted of about one-third of a bowl of cabbage or pumpkin soup per meal. Until the beginning of June, we were given one spoonful of soy sauce every other day which we were told to mix with our soup. But by mid-June this was stopped and we had to eat bland watery soup. The fish soup, which was served about three times a week, had one small fish in it about the size of a small dried croaker and was supposed to be shared by about 30 people. Portions were small but had a lot of salt in them so everyone anxiously waited for them.

The skeleton staff of the prison ate well, enjoying three meals a day. The inmates only ate two meals a day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Prisoners who had been reclassified as serious offenders and moved to cell block A unanimously complained that the food on the third [sic] floor, which is where all the worst counter revolutionaries were confined, was much worse than in any other cell block. I don't know if this is true or not. On February 28, there was another package from Chairman Lee Sun-Hung. With the food and things in the package I was able to improve my health for about 20 days. When they ran out though, my health began to worsen again. Since my room-mates couldn't receive packages because of the "seriousness of their crimes", I shared with them. But the food and daily necessities ran out in less than a month even though we tried to use them sparingly. But these packages contributed greatly to my health. During this time, my weight had been noticeably dropping and my skin was turning pale and green because of the total lack of sunlight. My fingernails grew however, and I filed them down on the cement floor of the cell. If I wasn't careful, I would hurt the end of my fingers and they would get infected. Whenever I hurt my fingers this way, I would grind the tobacco from my cigarettes into a powder and rub it on them (my room-mate said that it was a disinfectant) since I didn't have any medicine. Since I didn't have any soap after May, I washed my hair in plain water after haircuts and I even washed my sweaty clothes in plain water. Whenever I felt hunger or some other physical deprivation, I would bolster myself up by saying: "I will overcome this difficult test. Something good can come from suffering. This is nothing compared to death. No matter how healthy I was mentally, physically my health worsened daily because of the physical deprivation of not having anything to put in my stomach. Occasionally I thought that if things didn't get any better I would fall over dead regardless of my good mental health. On July 17, the inmate in the cell next to mine, cell block A, third floor [sic], cell 1, tried to commit suicide but they found him unconscious and saved him.

Thinking that the time was right, I wrote a letter to the French Consul in Saigon requesting a package with medicine, food, clothing, etc. When I gave it to the guard and asked him to pass it on, he took it and said he would but after that I never heard anything so it looks like it never did get passed on.

On July 27, all of the inmates in building A were given permission to go out into the sunlight (for 15 minutes) for the first time since last September 24 when we last saw the sun and sky. Since then, we have been outside a total of six times. My skin finally received a little sunlight but the physical suffering continued day after day and my body became very thin again. My health looked bad, I was so skinny that my blood vessels stuck out and I looked like I was all skin and bones. An old inmate named Pao who was working in our building brought me a handful of thick black looking salt wrapped up in some newspaper which looked like it came from the kitchen. That was on September 13.

I shared the salt with my room-mate General Hightop (Wahaukyo) and alternating every other day we would take five grains of salt and eat it as side dish with meals. I can remember the taste to this day. The salt ran out on September 24 and on October 5 I received this huge package of food, medicine and daily necessities from Chairman Lee Sun-Hung whom I thought had already

had already returned to Korea. There were also razor blades and nail clippers in the package. With the contents of this package, my health quickly improved. My waist grew about three inches and my weight rose about eight kilos so now I weight about 62 kilos and my waist is about 31 inches.

The time of suffering has passed and now the light of hope is shining. What school are Uki Soki and Sungi attending? I heard on the 22nd that the government is picking up the tab for their education and I wept for joy. Please make sure that the children study hard so that they can repay the country for what is has done for them. When you have the chance, please give the president and his cabinet my warmest thanks. When I was at death's gate, the thought that flashed through my mind like lightning was the problem of my children's education. Now even if I die I could close my eyes in peace. There is no way to tell when I will be released. But compared to before, the way my jailers have been treating me is improving.

On the 11th, the head of the prison looked in at me through the window in the side door to my cell and said hello.

Anyway, things have not turned out as badly as they could have and I think that death has gone far away. I have had minor illnesses but nothing serious so you don't need to worry. Buy some skates for Soki and Sungi and make sure that they skate where the water under the ice is shallow, not deep. Well, that's the end of my paper so I'll stop here. Be patient and strong. Bye.

Lee Tae-Yong

I wrote the part in the letter about each prisoner at Chihwa Prison getting 13 kilos of white rice a month for their staple diet when I was confined to my cell alone, but I was wrong.

The 13 kilos had already been reduced to 11 kilos for some time and it was again reduced to nine kilos. Even this amount was reduced from July 21, 1977.

October ended and by November 1 the prison officials had still not told me to write to my family so I asked the guard if he would let me write my November letter to my family and my letter asking for a package.

On November 3, at about 8:30 a.m., the guard came back with some instructions from the head of the prison written in English. It said that in the future they would only pass on letters which were written in Vietnamese.

The guard explained that this meant I couldn't write in English, Korean, French or Japanese. I could only write in Vietnamese. They knew full well that this would make it impossible for me to write letters since I didn't know Vietnamese.

This was actually just a way of blocking me from writing to my family. As far as writing to my family was concerned, it didn't make much difference since we had a secret communication network going but I was frustrated at not being able to write letters to Chairman Lee officially requesting packages. There

was nothing I could do but resign myself to the situation.

Chairman Lee's secret letters kept coming steadily under these precarious circumstances.

On November 15, I received some breath mints, American candy and things from Chairman Lee through our secret communications network and also my first secret letter from Counselor Anh Hui-Wan since I had been imprisoned.

He briefly wrote about what he had gone through and said that Counselor Suh, Choi Ki-Sun and he were continuing to receive packages regularly and that since my packages had been stopped they would send me things from theirs through the secret communications network. He told me to take care of my health.

On November 17, I received my first secret letter from Counselor Suh since I had been in prison. I send replies to Counselor Ahn and Counselor Suh, telling them to be strong and not to change in their devotion to their free homeland and to endure their suffering in prison.

Counselor Ahn had been sending me powdered milk, seasoned bean, ballpoint pens, American candy, garlicky red pepper paste, seasoned dried beef and other things every three days but almost all of the good things disappeared on the way to me and I received only about one third of what was sent. This was because there were three couriers who passed things on in relay fashion so on the way these hungry poor couriers picked away at the packages. All three of them made excuses, saying that they were honest but they were all alike.

These secret couriers were all given considerable remuneration but still more than half of everything that was being sent to me was being stolen.

On November 20, I spend my 51st birthday alone in my cell with a fever, a sore throat and a cough.

I envisioned my wife and children spending my birthday back in Korea in low spirits, praying for their father and husband in prison and this made me feel miserable all day.

On November 21, I received my second letter from Counselor Suh. He wrote that internal trouble had arisen in Communist China and that Hwang Hong Mun, Kang Chong and others had been driven out as counter revolutionaries. He said that on October 6 there had been a successful right-wing coup in Thailand. This was a good source of information about the international situation.

On November 27, another secret letter came from Chairman Lee. It said that a high-ranking Vietnamese police official had said that it looked like I would be released on either February 18 next year, a lunar holiday, or in May next year. This was counter to the October 15th letter which had said that I would be released for sure by the end of next year. Also enclosed was a letter which Chairman Lee had somebody write in Vietnamese requesting that he send me a package. He told me to copy this letter exactly and ask the guard to send it

to Chairman Lee once a month so that I could receive packages again.

I didn't know any Vietnamese but since Chairman Lee said just to copy the letter as though I were drawing a picture, I decided to go ahead and do it and just change the date whenever I sent it.

In the morning of November 30, I asked the guard to let me receive a package in December since I hadn't received one in November and I told him that I would write a letter requesting this in Vietnamese as the prison officials had instructed. He just laughed, asking me if I could write in Vietnamese and then left. It looked like he went to receive instructions from his superiors.

On the last day of November, to kill time I made a chart of the meals provided to the inmates on the fourth floor of cell block A of Chihwa Prison. It read as follows:

Inmates' Meals

| 1976 November | breakfast   | dinner                 |
|---------------|---|------------------------|
| 1 (M)         | fish soup   | carrot soup            |
| 2 (T)         | pumpkin soup  | noodle soup            |
| 3 (W)         | fish soup   | pumpkin soup           |
| 4 (T)         | Chinese cabbage soup                                  | noodles and fish paste |
| 5 (F)         | pumpkin soup  | Chinese cabbage soup   |
| 6 (S)         | fish soup   | noodle soup            |
| 7 (S)         | pumpkin soup  | pumpkin soup           |
| 8 (M)         | noodles and fish paste                                | pumpkin soup           |
| 9 (T)         | noodle soup   | cucumber soup          |
| 10 (W)        | pumpkin soup  | pumpkin soup           |
| 11 (T)        | noodles and fish paste                                | cucumber soup          |
| 12 (F)        | pumpkin soup  | Chinese cabbage soup   |
| 13 (S)        | Chinese cabbage soup                                  | Chinese cabbage soup   |
| 14 (S)        | pumpkin soup  | noodle soup            |
| 15 (M)        | bean sprout soup                                      | bean sprout soup       |
| 16 (T)        | pumpkin soup  | pumpkin soup           |
| 17 (W)        | pork soup   | carrot soup            |
|               | (12 pieces of meat about the size of a grain of rice) |                        |
| 18 (T)        | turnip soup   | pumpkin soup           |
| 19 (F)        | bean sprout soup                                      | cabbage soup           |
| 20 (S)        | pumpkin soup  | fish soup              |
| 21 (S)        | Chinese cabbage soup                                  | carrot soup            |
| 22 (M)        | bean sprout soup                                      | cucumber soup          |
| 23 (T)        | pumpkin soup  | pumpkin soup           |
| 24 (W)        | cabbage soup  | Chinese cabbage soup   |
| 25 (T)        | Chinese cabbage soup                                  | pumpkin soup           |
| 26 (F)        | bean sprout soup                                      | Chinese cabbage soup   |
| 27 (T)        | pork fat carrot soup                                  | pumpkin soup           |
| 28 (F)        | Chinese cabbage soup                                  | pumpkin soup           |
| 29 (S)        | Chinese cabbage soup                                  | pumpkin soup           |
| 30 (S)        | pumpkin soup  | Chinese cabbage soup   |

Notes

- (1) Half a bowl of soup constituted a meal for each kind of soup except fish soup.
- (2) About one third a bowl of fish soup constituted a meal since it was very salty.
- (3) The fish paste was diluted 20 or 30 times with water so one serving really only had about one half to one spoonful of fish paste in it.

On December 1, the warden came and said that I would be allowed to write to Chairman Lee Sun-Hung in Vietnamese but that I couldn't write to my family outside of Vietnam. During my nap time I diligently copied the letter to Chairman Lee.

Since I didn't know what the words meant, it took a lot of time to draw each word. After writing the letter this way, I passed the letter on to the warden through the guard.

On December 11, I wrote my second report to the Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs since being incarcerated. I just reported on things that had happened since the last report.

On December 13, the courier asked me for 600 dong in the new Vietnamese currency. After I told him that I would try to make sure he received it in the near future, I sent him away.

On December 14, after 74 days, I received an official package from Chairman Lee. The letter written in Vietnamese which I had send requesting the package had worked and I received a package of about 45 kilos.

Another secret letter came from Chairman Lee Sun-Hung the next morning and I wrote a reply and my second letter to my family in Seoul. The letter to my family read as follows:

December 14, 1976

Dear Uk-Mo,

This last year of endless grief began with me suffering in prison and it now ends and a new year begins. I have worried about your suffering. I know that ever since 1972 when you had major surgery that you have suffered a lot in the winter and I feel very bad that you must take care of the children alone and be the mainstay and pillar of the home. Now I'm going to write some things that won't make sense. This is to keep the Vietnamese couriers of this letter from throwing it away. I'll explain it all later.

[nonsense message \$300 (Vietnamese currency) - \$500]

Now I will continue the letter. My health has improved greatly. The beriberi and dizziness (from anemia) have all cleared up well. The otomycosis in my right ear was caused by some kind of bacteria so I took some of the Streptomycin which Chairman Lee send for my athlete's foot and cleaned out the inside of my ear. My hearing, which I had almost lost in that ear and which had been bothering me, has now completely returned and feels very good. I

think I will continue this treatment.

Since your birthday is coming up on the 26th and I can't celebrate it with you there, I will celebrate it here in my heart even though it's unfair.

I will celebrate Sungi's birthday on February 3 and Yon-Ho's birthday on the 5th, all in my heart. Please make sure and buy Sungi and Soki some skates so they will have a fun winter. It looks like I will be home to celebrate Soki's birthday.

[nonsense message, \$300 - \$400]

That is the end of the nonsense message but this letter goes on.

I think that I will be released at the soonest next February, right before New Year and at the latest May of next year. I can endure anything until then so don't worry about anything. Just keep the children happy and take care of your health. If you swell up again this winter make sure you go to the Chinese pharmacy and get some good medicine to cure it.

Chairman Lee Sun-Hung is helping me in many ways from the outside. My time of suffering has passed and I am very comfortable. Each month the prison officials are allowing us to go outside two or three times and my skin has returned to its original color.

Please give my greetings to my elders and to the Ministers and have a good new year. Be patient.

Lee Tae-Yong

The business about the "\$300 (Vietnamese currency) - \$400" was for the couriers to see since they had been asking me for 600 tong. Just in case they got mad and said they were going to tear up the letter and not send it, it would look like I was trying to get them their money.

As December drew to a close, I heard a lot of truck engines outside Chihwa Prison. I guessed that they were trucks to transport prisoners given amnesty and being released at the end of the year but actually it was the sound of trucks taking leaders of the old government -- special military personnel, special intelligence officers, hard core anti-Communists and others picked out among the Chihwa prisoners -- to the outskirts of Saigon. When these political prisoners unloaded from the trucks, they were transported by boat to North Vietnam.

The mass transfers to North Vietnam from Chihwa Prison had begun in the beginning of October 1976 but since I was isolated in a cell alone I didn't know anything about it until some 15 months later.

In the morning of December 20 at 8:00 a.m., Lieutenant Ku, head warden of the fourth floor of building A, opened my cell door and told me to come out in the hall and do some exercises and run up and down the hall. The hall was about 35 meters long and about 2.8 meters wide. It wasn't that big of a space but to someone who had been locked up in a cell it looked very big.

I did a few warm-up exercises and then ran a few laps up and down the hall. He let me exercise for about 15 minutes and then go to the water tank at the side of the hall and bathe.

Lieutenant Ku came back that afternoon at about 2:00 and opened my cell door for about 30 minutes and let a cool breeze into my stuffy cell.

From the perspective of an inmate in building A this was exceptional treatment. This special treatment continued everyday, except for the day we were allowed outside, until December 31. As the days went by, my running time was extended to 30 minutes.

I figured that this special treatment was being extended either in preparation for my early release or as a measure to restore my health midway through a long stay. For a while I had high hopes that I would be released before the end of the year but the last day of the year passed by without them taking notice of me.

The morning of January 1, 1977, dawned and my life in prison went on without any change.

Resident Warden Lieutenant Ku told me to write my letter requesting a January package. I took out the pattern letter which I had saved and copied it exactly, changing only the date which I changed to Arabic numerals and gave it to Lieutenant Ku in the afternoon.

Things went on this way and it didn't look as if I would be released in January and I realized that my running privileges had nothing to do with an early release. I was allowed to run, bathe and air out the inside of my cell on this day too.

At around 2:00 p.m. on January 5, 1977, I was moved from room 2 on the fourth floor of building A where I had been held for one year and three months and 12 days to room 3 on the third floor of building A. It too was a lonely single cell and I took this as a sign that I would be incarcerated a long time.

After I put things away from my pitiful little pack and spread the straw mat which served as my bed on the concrete floor, I sat there bored for a while and stared at the wall where a Chinese poem had been written.

It had been written by a political prisoner who had been jailed since the fall of South Vietnam. The poem was dated June 3, 1976, and the poet's name in Vietnamese was Ram Do Chang. Upon closer examination though, it was clear that he was a Vietnamese of Chinese origin.

PHIL SHIN CHAE DOK CHUNG  
A SA CHAE DOK WAE  
CHUNG CHIP NAM A CHI  
SUNG IN KYONG KWI CHUNG

I translated the poem as follows:

Even though my body and mind are bound here in prison,  
My heart is always outside.  
The task of a man is to follow the golden way of Confucius.  
It is noble to be patient and follow the golden way.  
While suffering in prison follow the greater path.

My heart went out to this poet who's words urged one on to following the straight path here in prison where it is so easy to cast aside one's loyalty, bend one's principles and degrade oneself by turning on one's superiors and comrades in order to live.

But this Chinese poem reflected a philosophy a little more passive than my own. So I expanded the meaning of the third and fourth lines of the poem as follows:

The task of a man is to calmly, like a mighty mountain, come fire or rain, with firm patriotism and personal integrity, overcome the steep trials of life cast down from heaven. To boldly resist and even be ready to face death in the face of beatings, threats and blackmail of our jailers is the most noble way. Let any trial present itself, even if it be a trial like the one faced on the thorny path to the cross and I will surely overcome it.

I never met Ram Do Chang but feel like a close friend. He has gone but his name remains.

I took a thin nail and in the wall next to the cell door wrote my name in Hangui "Minister Lee Tae-Yong".

In the afternoon of the day I was moved, a guard whom I had never seen before opened my door and gave me about one liter of soup for my dinner. When I looked at him like I wanted more, he barked, "That's enough! Get over there!" Then, staring meanly at me with his chin thrust out, he suddenly straightened up and roughly pushed me back into the cell and slammed the door shut.

A few days later I had to stubbornly stand up to another guard who was trying to take away my Kashmir blanket.

These crooks who were called guards would even secretly carry off prisoners' food, toothpaste, soap, etc. when they were drawing their water so they wouldn't be seen. I rejected their demands when it came to a few important things such as my blanket, my shoes, my briefcase, etc. but when it came to other things I usually gave in. This was necessary in order to be able to use Chairman Lee's secret communications network. Even though the courier was a high-ranking Communist official and I was able to keep my secret from one or two guards for a short time, it was extremely difficult to keep it from all of the guards for a long time. I was very careful about this.

Right after I got up on the morning of January 24, 1977, someone knocked on the door of cell 2 which was next to mine and I heard someone shouting. I

turned my head and listened.

"You in cell 3, you're a foreigner, aren't you?" he was asking loudly in English. "Yes, that's right," I replied. Then he said, "When the sun goes down and it is dark, go up to the cell door near the toilet to receive a letter. When I have a letter for you, I'll pound on the wall with my fist. Remember this."

He repeated this three times.

"Okay, I'll do it," I said and out difficult shouting exchange ended. Five minutes later a guard appeared and took roll call.

I wondered who on earth was in the next cell and how and why he wanted to send me some kind of letter.

I looked up toward the cell door near the toilet. I went over and crawled up on the cement wall that partitioned the toilet off from the rest of the cell. I could reach the bars on top of the door, about 2.7 meters up, but how were we supposed to exchange letters? I couldn't figure it out. On the other side of the door was another wall with bars on top of it and the space between these bars and the bars on top of the door was full of barbed wire. I guess that it must have been at least 1.8 meters between the side door of my cell and the side door to cell 3. What could I do with one's bare hands?

I couldn't figure it out so I decided to wait until dark and see what happened. The time passed slowly but it finally became dark.

Someone in cell 2 started pounding on the wall with their fist. I pounded back. I went to the toilet area, climbed up on the cement partition wall near the toilet, grabbed the bars above the door and waited.

A metal skewer clanked its way from cell 2 to cell 3. A letter was strapped to the end of it with a long rubber band. I took the letter and the skewer was pulled back into cell 2.

I wondered where the people in the next cell could have gotten such a metal skewer here in prison since such things are forbidden. Later I found out that it had been made by breaking off a piece of the barbed wire between the two cells. It had been cut by hand and then all of the barbs taken off. Whoever it was that had done this was surprisingly smart and dexterous.

The letter was written in English. It said that there were 2 inmates in the next cell. One was of Chinese descent from Malaysia named Rim Saeng Pim. The other had been a Colonel in the South Vietnamese army named Ho Ban Kiet. They introduced themselves to me in the letter and asked my name and my occupation. They asked when and why I was arrested, where my family was, and if I ever received care packages. The letter suggested that we exchange letters by means of the skewer in order to combat the loneliness of prison and suggested the following method of communication.

When someone in cell 2 wanted to send a letter to someone in cell 3 they were supposed to knock on the wall, "tap tap tap, tap tap tap, tap tap tap". In answer to this the person in cell 2 was supposed to knock "tap tap, tap tap, tap tap". As soon as this acknowledgment was sent, the person in cell 2 was to go right over to the toilet, stand up on the partition wall, and put his hand through the bars. When the skewer came clanking over he was supposed to take the letter and knock "tap, tap, tap". Then the person in cell 3 would pull the skewer back and the letter sending routine was complete.

Since the skewer was always kept in cell 2, I was told to go through the following steps when I wanted to send a letter.

I was supposed to knock "tap tap tap, tap tap tap, tap tap tap", and they would answer "tap tap, tap tap, tap tap". Then both sides would go right to the toilet area. Up to this point everything was the same.

From this point on though things were a little different. Cell 2 would push the skewer through without a letter. I would grab it and tie my letter to it. After this I would tap on the wall "tap, tap, tap" as a sign that they could pull the skewer back. My letter would go with it and that was the end of sending a letter.

The first letter to me from cell 2 asked me to do one thing. It told me to clear a path through the barbed wire between the two cells so that the skewer could be passed back and forth without any problems.

I thought that exchanging letters in this way would be a good way to combat my loneliness since there was no one else in my cell, but I thought that I should be careful until I knew more about the people next door.

After I did as they had requested and had cleared a safe path through the barbed wire between the two cells, I wrote a brief letter. I went and pounded on the wall, went to the toilet area, climbed up and waited for the skewer. Then I tied my letter to it with a piece of rubber band and sent it back.

After this, letters went flying back and forth between the two cells on the metal skewer almost every day.

When the guard who divided up the food on the 3rd floor served the Malaysian, Rim Saeng Pin, he always gave him less rice and soup than anyone else. The regular portions were already so small that Rim Saeng Pin was really desperate when he received less. One day the guard asked Rim for his lighter. Rim said he would give it to him if he would give him more food.

After Rim Saeng Pin gave him his lighter, the guard started giving him three and a half scoops of rice and one and a half scoops of soup per meal. This treatment only lasted for 5 days.

When the servings were cut back again, Mr. Rim gave the guard a pair of good leather shoes that he had been wearing. This time the larger servings didn't even last for 5 days.

Now Rim didn't have anything left to swap for food except the clothes he was wearing.

Rim promised the guard he would give him things from his next care package if he would just give him more food.

The guard rejected this offer and said he would give him more food only if he gave him the nice clothes he was wearing.

If he took of these good clothes and gave them to the guard, then he would have to ask his roommate, the former colonel, to lend him the worn out clothes

that he had been saving. The poor miserable Malaysian couldn't bring himself to do this so he just suffered without the extra food.

The guards took these stolen goods and either used them for themselves or gave them as bribes to certain wardens to keep their positions.

On January 30 the Malaysian, Rim Saeng Pin, was moved to the prison hospital with signs of serious illness as though something was wrong with his heart. This Malaysian had to go barefoot to the hospital since he had traded his shoes away for food.

Letters continued to come from cell 2 on the metal skewer. One said that from February 10 to February 17 all prisoners would be allowed special visits in celebration of Tet (a lunar holiday). During these visits friends could directly deliver packages to the prisoners. The letter from cell 2 said that the January letters requesting packages had been gathered at the prison office and that letters authorizing visits had been sent out with them at the beginning of February.

Just as this letter from cell 2 had said, visits began on February 10. The former colonel in the next cell, Ho Ban Kiet, received visitors on February 11.

Ho Ban Kiet's first wife who had been secretary to President Thieu's wife was being held in Rong Than prison so he couldn't meet her, but his aged mother, his 2nd wife and her small child came to visit.

While everyone else was enjoying their visitors, one person had to just sit alone in his cell, staring at the bars and walls around him, forbidden by prison officials to have any visitors. Me.

Two days before the end of the holiday, on 16 February, Chairman Lee Sun-Hung and his party came to the prison with a 30 kilogram package of food, daily necessities, medicine, clothes etc. to give to me. The guards said that they had instructions from their superiors not to allow me any visitors so Chairman Lee just gave him the package to pass on to me and left the package without visiting.

A few days later I got a secret letter from Chairman Lee. He said that he had been able to visit and give packages to the two Korean diplomats and the civilian in cell block AH and that they seemed to be in relatively good health. He said that he had submitted petitions to immigration officials and to Chihwa prison officials and done everything he could to be able to visit me, but sadly had been unable to do so.

One day before the lunar holiday it was rumored that there had been a radio broadcast that said that 50 percent of the political prisoners being held at Chihwa prison would be released. Everyone was wondering if they might be released but it turned out to be a false rumor.

On the evening of February 20, someone in cell 4 or 5, I couldn't tell which, began to make strange noises, crying and mumbling. Finally one of the prisoners had gone crazy. After about a week he was taken somewhere and disappeared.

On 27 February I wrote my 3rd report to the Korean Foreign Minister. I mentioned that from December 20, 1976 to January 8, 1977 I had been allowed 30 minutes daily to exercise, jog and bath. I mentioned the packages I had been receiving, the trips out into the sun light and my January 15 transfer to a different cell. I mentioned that there had been a rumor that all of the imprisoned Korean diplomats would be released by May 1977 but said that because of the way things had been going lately, it looked like we might be kept prisoners for a long time.

I also wrote a letter to my wife telling her not to worry, that I was healthy both in mind and body and saying that it looked like I might be released in May which is what I was praying for. I told her to hold on until we could meet again and described my thoughts and feelings about the one and a half years I had been imprisoned.

I sent this letter and the report to Seoul through the secret courier and Chairman Lee.

I got a haircut in the morning on March 3. The barber took half of a small broken mirror out of his tool kit and told me to look in it. I held the mirror in my hand and looked into it. It was the first time I had seen my face in some 500 days. My face had become long, wrinkled and thin. My heart sank when I saw myself. My face was much more haggard than I had imagined. I had to be firm. Even if my body suffered I would make it through this test. I held my tongue and returned the mirror to the barber.

On March 15 I got another 20 kilogram package of food, medicine and things from Chairman Lee. In the morning on March 17 I was allowed to go outside.

When I went outside, one of the guards took me over to a tomato patch. He said that his family was so poor that they couldn't send him any packages so he took care of this little tomato patch for the prison in return for a few tomatoes every once in a while. He then looked around to make sure no one was looking and picked 4 tomatoes for me to eat. I thought he was probably trying to make up for having carried off so much of my package the day before. When he said that his family was in such dire straits and that they never sent him any packages, I detected a little sorrow in his face and I felt bad for him.

At about 4:30 in the afternoon on March 19 the sound of ammunition exploding started. It sounded like several hundred rounds a minute were going off. Then the emergency sirens in Saigon went off which only happened when something important was happening. It was an emergency at the prison also. Armed guards paced back and forth in the halls on the third floor and made lots of noise.

I was breathless with the thought that perhaps South Vietnamese government troops had regrouped in the jungle and in answer to the desires of the people they were storming back into Saigon, but that wasn't the case. It was just an ammunitions dump at Rong Bin, that had been used by the guerillas of the old government, blowing up. It had been built by the U.S. and was one of the biggest ammunitions dumps in the Orient. This giant ammunitions dump kept exploding for three and a half more hours until 8:00 that evening when the sound of exploding ammunition finally stopped.

On April 6 I wrote my 4th report to the Foreign Minister and another letter to my wife. I reported about my last excursion outside and that the exercise privileges which I had enjoyed from December last year until the beginning of this year had been restored and from March 16 on I had been allowed to exercise in the hall for about 30 minutes every morning (except Sunday) and to go the water tank on the side of the hall and bathe. I reported that I was the only one on the 3rd floor of cell block A to be allowed to do this and I also mentioned that I had received about a 20 kilogram package from Chairman Lee on March 15.

In my letter to my wife I reflected on the 2 years we had been apart. It had been 2 years as of April 6.

On April 19 Rim Saeng Pin who had been in the Chiwha prison hospital for so long returned to cell 2 of the 3rd floor of cell block A.

That afternoon a warden showed up and asked Rim Saeng Pim if he could come up with an airplane ticket to Malaysia if he were released. This was a hint that his release was close at hand.

Soon a letter came sliding over from cell 2 with an account of Rim Saeng Pim's stay in the hospital.

While he had gone to the prison hospital barefoot he soon had shoes sent to him by his friends in Saigon who were now permitted to send him packages once a month. When he thought about all that went on in the prison hospital, though, he said he shuddered.

There were usually about 60 patients in the prison hospital although sometimes there were more than this. As for doctors there was one new woman doctor and one female nurse who played the role of a doctor. The head of the hospital also worked at a hospital in the city so he only poked his head in about once or twice a week and then disappeared. They didn't have much medicine so patients kept dying from things like dysentery, acute pneumonia, or mild appendicitis which spread around among the patients. Human life was as worthless as the life of a fly. During the 2 months and 20 days he was in the hospital, more than 30 patients died.

The prisoners who worked as guards at the hospital would strip the good clothes off a patient as soon as he died and dump his body in some old rags. They would do this kind of despicable thing as though it were nothing. When someone received a package the guards would all come running and ask for this

and that and in a few days the package which was meant to last for a whole month would be gone, carried off by these thieves. Rim said that the guards on the 3rd floor of cell block A were gentlemen compared to the guards in the hospital. He said that the hospital had been hell and that heaven was the cell he was in right now, cell 2 on the third floor of cell block A.

After reading Rim Saeng Pim's letter, I decided that I would not go to the Chihwa prison hospital no matter how sick I was. I would have the doctor come visit me.

The exercise, jogging, bathing privileges which had been granted me every day except Sundays since March 16 ended on April 6. From April 7 on I was only permitted to bathe at the water tank and after about a month, by May 7, this was stopped, too.

On May I wrote my 5th report to the Foreign Minister and another letter to my wife. I reported that I had been allowed outside quite often lately but that the other privileges which I had been enjoying had been cut back since around April 6 and had ended completely by May 7. They had had nothing to do with getting me ready to be released.

Since the prospects for our being released in a reasonable amount of time seemed to be slipping away, I requested that international pressure be applied upon the Vietnamese Communists. I suggested that we would be released only if the U.S. and other free allies took a strong stand i.e., saying that Vietnam could only be admitted to the UN when they complied with the UN constitution. I requested that the Korean government try to push this strategy with our allies. I added that I was in good health both mentally and physically and that I would overcome my difficulties through my indomitable will.

In my letter to my wife I sent my love and told her what had been going on with me lately. I told her to make sure she took good care of her father if he was still alive.

On May 19 in the afternoon the warden said that I had been granted bathing privileges again, but after a few more times this was stopped again permanently.

On May 19 at about 6:00AM I was moved to cell 3 on the 2nd floor of cell block B. I was still the only one in the cell. The cell had been used by female prisoners before.

This was the place where someone had committed suicide and the women had called the warden and raised a fuss. This is where the sound of women singing had come from. This is where the sound of sobbing had come from. When I had first come here to the prison I thought that I would never have anything to do with these women's cells but now fate had turned out this way.

The fixtures in the cells where the women had been were better than those in the cells where the men were. The water pot next to the toilet was a good one made of plastic and looked like it was three times bigger than the ones in

the men's cells. Also the toilet area itself was a little bit wider and cleaner. The light though was a bit dimmer.

There was a lot of dust around and it looked like the cell had not be used for awhile. There were cockroaches crawling all around so I killed them and cleaned the place up. I sat down and pulled out one of my precious cigarettes and smoked it to ease my loneliness.

Since the latter part of January for about three and a half months I had been able to handle my boredom. Whenever the loneliness of isqlation got bad I would scribble something down on a piece of paper during siesta time or in the evening and knock on the wall and sent it to cell 2. If I didn't have anything to write with I would tie 3 or 4 cigarettes to the skewer and send them. Sometimes in order to ease the boredom I would just send over a message like "There were 11 stones in my rice tonight. This is more than usual." When a package arrived we even sent each other food on the skewer. The skewer could hold about 300 grams if it was tied down well so with 3 or 4 passes enough food could be sent to fill one up.

One night cell 2 sent over 2 full 300 gram plastic bags full of warm "che" (a gruel made from boiled rice and sugar).

I didn't have anything to cook in or any fuel to burn and these kind of things were strictly forbidden so how could they have made this warm "che" to send. I wrote and asked them. The reply from cell 2 came late that night. They said that they used two cans from packages they had received since New Years. One they used as a little pot and one they used as a little burner. For fuel they used plastic bags and pieces of old clothes. They illustrated with drawings how they lit the fire and cooked the gruel.

As for when they cooked, they said that all they had to do was to avoid the times when the guards made their rounds, such as at 9:00PM, midnight, and 4:00AM. They said it was also alright to cook during siesta time because the guards were all sound asleep.

Before this, the only way I could eat Ramyon noodles was to soak them in lukewarm water which the guards brought. Now I could boil water and eat Ramyon every night. The taste of noodles that have been soaked in lukewarm water for a long time and those that have been cooked in boiling water is completely different. Canned goods were also better cooked this way.

At 6:00 in the morning on May 21, 1977 the warden came and told me to pack my bags. I was moved again.

Escorted by the head of cell block AB and two guards, I was taken with my bags to a building I didn't know, about 150 meters away, and turned over to a tall looking man.

This man to whom I had been turned over and a few of his subordinates took me up to the 2nd floor.

The hall on the 2nd floor was so dark that if the lights were turned off you wouldn't be able to see a person's face right in front of you even in the middle of the day. There were cells on both sides of the hall.

I was put in a cell at the end of the hall, cell 12. Of course I was alone in the cell.

The cell including the toilet area looked like it was about one and a half pyong' (3.95 square yards) and was much more dimly lit than the cells in cell block A.

In the cells in cell block A there was a toilet in one corner which was separated from the rest of the cell with a small concrete wall about 1.2 meters high so that when one had to go to the bathroom the other people in the cell would not have to watch. In this cell there was no such wall and no such privacy.

In the room there were lots of huge bugs crawling all around especially from the toilet hole. They were much bigger than cockroaches.

In a word this place was much worse than cell block A. I figured that my transfer here meant for sure that I would be held for a long time.

At around 7:00 the next morning the warden opened the door and told me to draw some water and clean up the room. The water tank was right next to my cell, cell 12. The hall dead ended at the water tank.

I dipped the water out with a bucket and poured it in the toilet. The water in the toilet gurgled and just sat there draining out slowly. When the water drained out, the bugs came swarming back up into the toilet. When I told the warden that the water didn't drain well he had a guard, clad only in underwear, come in and clear the drain by filling it up with water, sticking a wooden pole with a rag tied around the end of it into the toilet hole, swishing it around a couple of times and pulling it out. The water drained out quickly and the bugs swarmed back up into the hole.

When I was cleaning the cell with the door open under the supervision of the warden and a guard, the guard called a prisoner from the cell across from mine and told him to clean the cob webs from my cell. The prisoner's body was all swollen as though he had some kind of disease. He got a broom and started slowly clearing away the cob webs. While the warden and the guard were standing a way off talking, this obviously sick man stopped what he was doing for a moment and, pointing at the small piece of soap I had in a soap dish, said "Can I have this?" in English.

I felt sorry for him and felt deep compassion but I couldn't give it to him. Remembering the hardships I'd gone through last summer without soap I turned to him and said, "I'm sorry. That's all the soap I've got."

I wasn't sure if I would still get packages since I had been transferred to such a bad place and Chairman Lee's secret communication network might not work so I couldn't give him the soap.

When he had finished wiping away the cob webs he trudged out of my cell back to his staring at me and the soap with a look of envy.

Then I finished cleaning and they slammed the door shut.

After I put everything away from my bags, spread out my straw mat and sat there for a while thinking gloomy thoughts, I decided to get up and go through every nook and cranny in my cell and get rid of the bugs.

There was something in this cell which had not been in the cells in cell block A. It was an old concrete wash stand attached to the wall next to the toilet. The plumbing pipes were still connected to it and on the floor beneath it was a square concrete sink-like thing that one could do laundry or wash dishes in. It looked like these basins had not been used for a long time. The pipes were so rusted and old that no water came out, not even a drop. A lot of insects were hiding and scurrying around behind the pipes under the wash stand.

I lit a match and stuck my hand in behind the pipes to see what was there but quickly pulled it out. There were some long wire skewers made from barbed wire with the barbs removed. They were long and hard to hide so they had been wound up like a clock spring. The shortest one was about 1 meter and the longest about 3 meters.

This cell was darker than the cells in cell block A and even with the light on it was so dark under the wash stand that it was a perfect place to hide them.

But I wondered how the inmates in this room had been able to get at the barbed wire which was so high up.

Unlike cell block A, not only wasn't there any partition wall around the toilet, but the barbed wire wasn't even on the same side of the room as the toilet so one couldn't even stand on the toilet to reach it. The barbed wire was up about as high as two men. One person would have had to stand on the other person's shoulders.

The barbed wire had been firmly attached to the metal supports and was all tangled up.

It had been no small task to have made these skewers without any tools.

The prisoners in this cell had probably made them just to chase away the boredom and blues a bit. Now where were the prisoners who had made these? A lot of people had been taken to North Vietnam. Were they in a prison somewhere in Hanoi making more skewers like these?

I just sat there with these metal skewers in my hand thinking all sorts of things when I heard someone at the end of the hall. I quickly hid the skewers and sat back down.

I spent one whole day and then another worrying about where I was. All I knew was that I was in cell 12. I didn't even know what building I was in.

I hadn't received any packages for two months since the 20 kilogram March 15 package and my food supply had run out except for a little bit of sesame salt.

I really was in bad shape now having been transferred so much that the secret network had broken down.

I was just sitting there thinking about how I would have to battle again with the demons of sickness and the loneliness of being isolated this way, when someone opened the cell door to give me my dinner. When the door opened the person took one step into the cell and handed me a box of matches. This was the one thing that I did have plenty of so I didn't take it from him. Besides he was a stranger. He looked at me with an urgent look and told me to take it. I took it and stuck it in my pocket and then got my dinner.

When the cell door closed, I took out the box of matches and looked inside. My goodness! How could this be? Inside beneath about 20 matches was a letter from Chairman Lee.

Who was the person who had delivered the letter? It wasn't Lieutenant Ong Ba so could it be Mr. Jin Saudam or Mr. Jin Kuho? I thanked my savior for extending me this hand of salvation.

Cell 12 in this building was so dark that I had to have the lights on even in the middle of the day to be able to read the letter. I read the letter while moving around in the cell trying to find the spot with the best lighting.

Chairman Lee said that the temporary stop in the flow of packages from him had not been solved yet but that I should be receiving packages again by next month, June. In the meantime he said that he would send me the food I needed through the secret courier so he told me to let him know what I needed. He also told me that the courier would be back that afternoon to pick up my reply so to write it and set it aside during siesta time. I couldn't help but be amazed at how fast Chairman Lee had formed this new secret communications network.

During siesta time I wrote my 6th report to the Foreign Minister. It began, "A. Time is short so I'm writing this with the lights out in my dark cell. Sorry if my handwriting is bad."

I don't know why I started the report this way but then I went on to report that with my transfer to this cell, it looked like I would be held for a long time. I added that looking at the record of the Vietnamese government thus far, it seemed dangerous to expect them to be humanitarian or make any

reasonable concessions concerning me. I said that the only way was to match might with might and have our allies insist that Vietnam not be admitted into the UN until they began to comply with the rules in the UN charter. Compliance to the charter would include such things as conducting a joint investigation into the problem of the U.S. MIAs, releasing foreign diplomats who were being held illegally and giving priority to releasing all foreign prisoners. I said that if the free world was disinterested in this splendid opportunity or pursued it with lukewarm diplomacy that the road to our release would be blocked for a long time. I ended the report with several administrative matters.

I wrote to Chairman Lee that the only food I had left was some sesame salt and asked him to send salted nuts, salted fish, canned meat, sugar, bananas, etc.

I folded the report and the letter up small and put them back in the match box under the 20 or so matches and stuck the box in my pants pocket until the courier came around that afternoon and took it.

That next month I often received some salted fish and some American candy, red pepper paste, salted nuts, sugar, crackers, some dried meat, cookies and other things through the secret couriers.

I found out that I was now on the 2nd floor of cell block D in cell 12.

On June 6, 1977 I received my first letter from my wife in Seoul since I was detained by the Vietnamese Communists. My wife's letter had been given to the Thai ambassador to Korea who had passed it onto the embassy of some ally to Saigon where it was given to Chairman Lee who passed it on to me. The letter contained the sorrowful feelings of my family after having been separated for 2 years and 2 months.

It mentioned the moments of despair when they felt as though their father and husband had been lost forever, the moments of thin spider web-like hope that he would live and be returned to them. It covered the whole time of more than 2 years which they had spent saddened by thinking of the suffering that their husband and father must be going through at the hands of his lawless jailers. It mentioned how even in the midst of all this that nature moved on and that the children were all taller, they were all 2 years older, even the youngest child had now entered junior high school, that the government was paying for the education of all the children and that they were all doing well in school, that every Sunday the children went to church and prayed with their mother for God's blessings on their father. The letter said for me not to worry, that the family was all healthy and for me to just take care of my health.

After reading the letter my mind was full of all sorts of things and my heart was pounding. Dinner came but after eating just a little bit I put my utensils down.

I spent 2 days thinking about my family. I wondered about what my future would be and decided to be firm and carry on.

On 8 June in the morning I decided to secretly make myself a clothes line and some utensils for cooking, so I went over to the wash basin and pulled out a 2 meter long piece of wire from behind the pipes. I was breaking it into a piece about 1.5 meters long when suddenly I heard someone coming down the hall and a key opening my cell door. I quickly bent the wire into an S shape and folded it up in the mosquito net on my straw mat. It would have taken too much time to hide it back under the wash basin so I took this emergency measure.

When the door opened the warden and a guard walked in. The warden just came in for a little while and then went somewhere and came back in about 5 minutes. While he was gone the guard searched my bags. He was an ugly cuss around 20 years old. He roughly went through my things throwing them all around and making me very nervous. He said that if there was any hidden money he would find it. When he didn't find any money he confiscated all of the wire which I had hidden in the mosquito net.

On 9 June I received a huge 80 kilogram package from Chairman Lee. Among the things in the package were 2 bottles of the best multiple vitamins available which the Korean Ambassador to Thailand, Pak Kun, had sent. This was a rare treasure here in Chihwa prison. There was also some thread, needles, a mirror, etc. in the package.

On 10 June I wrote my 7th report to the Foreign minister and another letter to my wife. I just told them about what had been going on since my last correspondence.

The next morning around 9:00 I started to smell a storn sewer smell in my cell. Of course you could smell the sewer in every cell at Chihwa prison but the smell on this day pierced my nose. When I looked around to see where the smell was coming from I discovered that the sewer pipe coming from the floor above had ruptured and sewer water was running all over. When I told the guard this he moved me to cell 4 on the 2nd floor of cell block B.

Around 3:00 that afternoon the prison official who had been safekeeping my Samson briefcase, my key ring, my ivory pipe, and my ivory signature stamp returned them to me and said that he would continue to hold on the 320 U.S. dollars and 19 Vietnamese Dong for me. The warden said that the prison was short of storage space so they were returning everything except money. I desperately hoped that they were deliberately returning my goods in preparation for releasing me but my hope was in vain. This time what the warden had told me was actually true.

Here at Chihwa prison each warden had their own area that they were in charge of during the regular work days. After regular work hours though and on holidays a duty officer took charge.

During the 3rd week of June a real mean warden pulled duty on the 2nd floor of cell block B. He went around inspecting from cell to cell cursing at all

the inmates and making life miserable. He went around harassing the prisoners over every little thing he could find, like if a mosquito net wasn't folded right or their dishes weren't stacked just right, or if the prisoner appeared not to be in a good mood when he took roll.

Late in the afternoon on June 13 this mean warden was conducting a special roll call starting from cell number 1, opening each cell and yelling at the prisoners.

When he got to my cell and opened the door he pointed at the things from my package which I had arranged on the concrete floor and yelled something about straightening them up. I became angry and just sat there and stared at him and said in Korean "I don't know Vietnamese." Then I repeated it in English "I don't know Vietnamese," and then turned my head away from him toward the cell wall and sat there not moving.

The guard said something to him that must have been good, and the mean warden shut my cell door without a word and started yelling at the Vietnamese prisoner next door. He went to every cell and cursed at the prisoners.

On 19 June Chairman Lee sent me a letter which said that on April 4 a British diplomat who worked at the UN, Secretary White, had been arrested by Vietnamese Communist officials in Saigon, had succumbed to the black mail and threats of the Communists, and had written a confession stating that in cooperation with the French consulate he had been conducting a spy mission in Vietnam and reporting to the British government. Chairman Lee said that this had caused all sorts of problems and that as far as the reports from the imprisoned Korean diplomats and other Koreans still living in Vietnam stated, things had become a little more difficult. In the future the French consulate in Saigon could help send administrative reports as long as they were written in English. He told me to continue to write my reports and that he would continue to do everything he could to send them to Seoul. He said that he had been sending my reports to Seoul through the Korean Ambassador to France, Ambassador Yun, and that now he had established another secret reporting channel through the Korean Ambassador to Thailand, Ambassador Pak. I was deeply grateful to the French government for all of the humanitarian support they had given me over the last 2 years.

On June 21, one month after I had been transferred to cell block B, for some reason or other I couldn't get to sleep. I tried and tried and finally around day break I slept for about 2 hours.

My insomnia became worse each day. One June 23 at about 10:30PM I got up and started writing letters to make me tired so I could go to sleep. I wrote a thank you to Ambassador Pak Kun for the multiple vitamins he had sent me. At around midnight I wrote my 8th report to the Froeign Minister. I told him about all of my recent transfers and about everything else that had changed.

I layed back down around 1:30 in the morning, June 24, and tried to go to sleep but I was wide awake and there was this buzzing noise I could here and I just layed there with my eyes open the whole night. I tried to over this problem by just using my head but things didn't go well and by around 4:40 I started to get the chills and then my temperature started rising and my body became hot.

Since I had been incarcerated on 3 October 1975 I had had the flu and colds and various other minor illnesses but I had never had my temperature go up this high before. I wrote a quick letter to Chairman Lee asking him for some sleeping pills and some medicine to break my fever. As the time passed my whole body began to ache and it became hard to endure no matter if I was lyind down or sitting up.

Since the fall of South Vietnam, medicine had become very scarce in Saigon and Chairman Lee souldn't find any of the medicine I had requested so he sent some Chinese medicine. I took this medicine and some vitamins and was able to sleep a little bit.

By siesta time on June 26 I still had a fever but I felt a little better so I got up and wrote an urgent letter to Ambassador Pak Kun asking him to take care of some matter that Chairman Lee had requested of me. I was so sick that I had a hard time controlling the pen so I just wrote a short letter and sent it off that afternoon after siesta time.

Barely 30 minutes after I sent it off my temperature began to rise again. It went up to 40 degrees centigrade and my whole body ached.

For about 3 days I couldn't eat any food or drink much water. I thought if things continue on this way I might die so I tried to bolster up all of my mental strength to hold on, but perhaps because even mental strength has a limit, the illness continued to rage.

On June 27 it appeared that even the prison officials were beginning to worry. Several officials from the prison headquarters came to see me and the head of cell block D and his assistant came and looked in on me several times. I knew that the head of cell block D usually kept pretty close tabs on me.

Shortly after I was transferred to cell block D there had been a meeting for all of the wardens for cell block D. At this meeting the head of the cell block had told the wardens that I was a particularly malignant counter revolutionary and he had instructed them to keep a close eye on me. One of the officers in attendance at this meeting looked up Chairman Lee and told him this and Chairman Lee in turn told me in a secret letter. Perhaps this was the reason why when I was transferred to cell block D, my time outside had been cut back to one third of what it had been in cell block A.

This time, however, Lieutenant Nam, resident warden of the 2nd floor of cell block D, knew that this was no ordinary illness and he told me to pack my things to go to the prison hospital.