

"The Vienna Agreement does not protect fake diplomats like you. You were a Korean military and intelligence person."

The white-shirt person responded.

"Why do you talk to me? No more. I'll keep silent.

Please answer me, what part of the Vienna Agreement has your statement? Look! The UN's DP list has my name."

The senior agent resumed his talk:

"Blood is thicker than water. We have the same forefathers. Let's talk as Koreans. We talk for your future. We're trying to make a decision favorable to you."

"Why do you want to talk to me? I don't have anything to say. If you are close to this new Vietnam, and if you are my fellow Koreans, why didn't you do anything to rescue us from our 3-year long prison life? You are contradicting yourself. You said you are generous, my bright future...."

The Kim Il Song looking man shouted to me:

"You, S.O.B."

I reacted:

"You, S.O.B."

He took off his top jacket and approached me. He intended to hit me.

I reacted to his act.

"You, S.O.B., hit me!"

I approached 2 steps and prepared myself to fight.

He was about 45 or 47. Fat, not muscle.

I had lost weight, but I was a trained Tae Kwon Do athlete. I kept myself in shape in the prison.

Before the fight, the person in the white shirt stopped us.

The junior person resumed his talk on nationalism, humanitarian way, my sister in North Korea and her family. I kept silent.

He proclaimed a 10-minute break. I got out of the room and sat on a chair in the hallway. The guard was there.

It was a 20-minute break.

I kept silent.

The senior person suggested: "Today is enough. Why don't you think things over in your cell?" Then he added one more line.

"We have something to talk as Koreans. We will tell you about your sister and nephews and nieces."

"I don't think we should meet again. I'll not give up my rights. I'll keep silence tomorrow. The 38th parallel, divided nations, that's enough tragedy. We should not call our names in Saigon. More tragedies are here. Please stop here!"

On the way to the door,

"This is our last meeting. Wish you best."

It was siesta when I returned to the prison. I was separated from Mr. Suh and Mr. Ahn's BC building. I was confined to the D building, second floor, Room #9. My baggage was in the D building. I could not see pillow. In the afternoon, I was moved to the D building, third floor, Room #36, and again moved to the E building, third floor, Room #11. The E building did have solitary cells. I saw Mr. Ahn in the BC building, fourth floor, Room #6, approximately 100 meters away from me.

September 25 (Night) and September 26 (Morning): I tried to send a message to him.

"North Korean Agents"

"firm resistance"

"keep silence".

And I succeeded. He understood what I tried to send. I asked him to do the same as I did to the North Korean agents.

Mr. Ahn moved his fan from right to left and then from left to right and ran to the corner. I figured out his misunderstanding of my intended message. He repeated the same act, and I gave up my efforts.

In the night of September 26, I tried again to send my message. He tried to repeat the same act.

September 26: I heard Mr. Suh was interrogated by the North Korean agent in his isolated cell #36 in D building's third floor. I wrote my message and sent it to him via secret route. I explained what I did and why. Keeping silence and diplomat's right under the Viennal Agreement were what he could also utilize.

I received his message in the night of September 26. I sent another message during the siesta hour.

The North Korean's interrogation of Mr. Suh began in the afternoon of September 25. There were 3 "meetings" for Mr. Suh.

I saw Mr. Ahn was heading to somewhere for his interrogation in the morning and afternoon of September 27.

Mr. Ahn sent me medicine, pad and food. The pad was used for our communication.

September 27: I received Mr. Suh's second message. I read it again and again. He was under great pressure. I sighed and then sent a message -- to keep you national patriotism over your life or death, to be courageous in confronting the North Korean agents.

He sent me another message.

"I accuse them, and Mr. Kim Il Song does not like you guys, because you are really bad guys."

"Ask Mr. Kim Il Song to pay million bucks for my life!"

He wrote his question and answer sessions with the agents. I was cheered by his message.

In the afternoon of September 29, 1978, I was visiting the same office again with Lieutenant Huin, the Cheekbone's aide.

"I don't like you to send me to the North Korean agents. I will not open my mouth. You don't need to bring me to them."

"You did not tell my anything, so that we asked for their help. If you tell me everything, I don't intend to bring you there."

"I'm a diplomat. I don't oblige to answer yours or their questions. Period."

The same building, the same floor, the same room, the same agents, were waiting for me. One policeman was inside the room, not outside. That's the only difference.

Last Monday I reported the near-explosive situation in the room to the Police Lieutenant. He was serious when I reported the case. The different place of the policeman was from my report of the incident.

The junior agent opened his mouth.

"We were sorry for what happened last Monday. We just want to talk as Koreans. Don't be emotional."

"I was reasonable. We finished our business. I'll keep my mouth shut."

I was determined. Whether the international laws protect me or not, I didn't care. I just could not face these agents.

The senior agent tried to change my heart with a story about my sister in North Korea.

"If you want to hear, we can provide news about your sister and her family."

Two or three minutes passed without my words.

The junior agent told me:

"You claim you are a diplomat. O.K. You don't want to come to North Korea. O.K. Two Koreans now meet and discuss many things. Why don't we just talk?"

The two agents made a good team.

The senior agent liked to threaten and the junior liked to appease.

I kept my mouth shut.

The senior person opened his mouth.

"If there is war in Korea, you should aim at your nephew and niece. Do you like to see that situation?"

He changed his tactics from force to cultural approach.

"Your sister asked the International Red Cross to bring you to her. You don't have a choice. You have to go to Pyoungyan."

They talked to me about nationalism, "blood," South and North Korea's talk. I kept my mouth shut.

They knew my hometown. They took out some papers from a briefcase. One read my home address, "#142 Ubong-li, Ubong-Myon, Kumchon-Kun, Hwanghae Province. Now, it is an orchard field."

I was suspicious when they talked about my sister. Now, I was convinced that they knew my background. They could hurt my feelings. But my view on life and death and national interest had been already firmly established. The agents could not affect my views on life and the nation.

Lien, the Secretary of E building told me when I returned to the prison:

"Three Korean diplomats should be sent to Hanoi for the second round interrogation."

I lost my appetite. I lost hope.

But I had to fight them until the last moment. I opened a can and ate it with rice.

I wrote a message to Mr. Suh about today's interrogation, the right to keep silence, and my determination.

September 30 (Morning): I carried the water to the room and cleaned the room. I was meeting the North Korean agents again. The same place. The policeman was outside the room.

"Did you have a good sleep last night?"

"I'll tell you about your sister, if you want."

He repeated the same words.

"You killed 500 Vietnamese. Tell me if you did not kill them!"

It was another threat.

"Yes, you did. You cannot say a word about it."

The senior person murmured:

"Now, two Koreas met. What do you think of it?" You can tell me about it.

He stared at me and said:

"What do you trust: The U.N. Secretary-General will save your neck. Do you believe that? I don't think he cares."

Then he was mad. He raised his voice:

"Do you believe in Park Chung Hee? No, he does not want to spend a penny for your life. Do you think you'll return to South Korea? I'm sorry, no way. Why does the Vietnam government provide 3 meals a day to you? The Vietnamese are not dumb. You don't know yet the fact that war criminals were killed."

*The junior person said:

"What's your political belief? Let me hear that, that only!"

He continued over my silence:

"Well, you don't want to talk about it."

"How about the unification? Outside political ideology, you can say something on unification."

I closed my ears with my two hands. I had to show my will power.

The Kim Il Song looking person said:

"Do you know what's going on in South Korea? I don't think you know."

He talked about corruption, injustice, political instability, college student demonstrations, many famous political, economic, cultural and religious leaders. What he was saying seemed true. But I still chose South Korea over North Korea or Vietnam.

He concluded:

"This is your time. You shouldn't miss this time. Once you miss it, you will regret. After Korea's unification, you will have glorious days or you will be executed like the war criminals. Look at the Second World War and Vietnam. It is all dependent upon your decision."

The beautiful Aozaid woman who wore white pants, brought 3 glasses of Vietnamese juice with ice, and placed them on the table. The senior person pushed a pack of cigarettes to my side and suggested me to drink.

I shook my head in an expression of my rejection.

He made grimaces. His voice hit a higher octave.

"Your sister asked the International Red Cross to bring you back to her. You will go to Pyongyang. You should write your statement as to why you choose North Korea over South Korea. If you don't, we will write for you and distribute to news media people."

I stared at him.

He paused and said:

"How many children do you have? Do you miss them?"

They threatened and appeased; but could not open my mouth.

Lunch break and then siesta. After siesta, I returned to the fourth encounter with them.

The senior person said:

"Did you take a nap? I don't think so. You may need sleeping pills. Let me know if you need them."

The junior person added:

"You don't reject Korean unification, do you? We should discuss unification issues. What do you think of the issues.?"

I closed my ears with my hands. I looked at a mango tree outside the window. I turned my face to them. The senior person took a shot. He had an already prepared camera.

I closed my face with my hands.

"Without my permission, you cannot take a shot. No!"

He continued shooting. I stood and shouted:

"I will destroy the camera."

He ran away to the hallway. I followed him. The policeman stopped me there. I had to return to my chair.

He returned to the room for further interrogation.

"You came to Vietnam as a military attache in 1964. You could be proud of that career."

"Oh, you received a medal from Thien. Why didn't you run away with him if you are a close friend of his?"

"What's ROTC? Tell me about that. The 2nd Army Chief of Staff? You are a graduate of the Korean West Point Class #7? He reviewed the paper and put it back into the briefcase.

It was not 1964 when I came to Vietnam. I received 4 medals from the South Vietnam government. The highest honor was the gold crown medal. They didn't know that.

They didn't know I was the first company commander of the 7th regiment of the Sixth Division at Yaln River during the Korean War. They didn't know exactly when I was promoted to the general's rank. They missed important parts of my career.

Unfortunately to me, they knew my hometown and sister. And they tried to persuade or force me to come to North Korea.

The senior person met my sister. He knew a story: I lost my mother when I was young. My elder sister took care of me. We were a poverty-stricken family. One day we planned to take a long trip, but I didn't have a pair of shoes. I cried. My sister went to neighbors and brought back used ones.

He told me that story, my sister and I were the only ones who knew that story.

I closed my ears with my hands. He told me:

"I have never seen actors like you. You are a third-class actor."

The junior person emphasized the unification of the homeland, dream of all Koreans.

I paid attention to the flower patterns on the floor and thought about Pythagoras geometry.

The senior person told me:

"You are the runaway from North Korea. North Korea and Vietnam signed a pact to send criminals to the nation where the crime was committed. I'll take you to North Korea. Don't worry! We will do it."

And he continued his talk on South Korea's corruption.

I stopped him there.

"You talked to me about South Korea's corruption one hundred times, and you will talk another hundred times. But I'll remain in South Korea. Don't try anymore, please!"

The fourth interrogation did not go anywhere.

I talked to the escorting Police Lieutenant:

"I'll die here. I shall not go to North Korea. You should know this."

He responded:

"Your hometown is in North Korea. Your relatives are in North Korea. You have to go."

"No. I have a wife and children in South Korea. I'm a diplomat of South Korea.

Lien, Secretary of ED building accompanied me to my room on the third floor. He was the Education Department Director under Thien's leadership and became a prisoner. His uncle was the Communist and Police Captain who provided secretarial position for him. He spoke English.

He has been a friend of mine for over a year. He told me:

"My boss told me you will be sent to Hanoi between October 25 and November 25 for the second round interrogation. The North Korean people will interrogate you there."

A bowl of rice and cold soup were waiting for me. Mr. Ahn sent the food to me. I ate it, but without any appetite.

I cleaned up the dishes and I wrote a note to Mr. Suh about the day--contents of interrogation, right to keep silence, almost destroying of their camera, the conversation with the Cheekbone's aide and Lien's information that

we all be sent to Hanoi. I also added: if I were forced to go to North Korea, I would kill myself on the airplane or ship. I would use a belt, or I would cut my vessels with my teeth.

I looked at Mr. Ahn. I saw his white undershirt. He was standing. I could only see his top. I tried to show my words, "Prepare to go to North Korea" to him and my determination to kill myself in the case of a forced trip to North Korea.

All our baggage was in Mr. Ahn's room. My body messages also instructed him to prepare our baggage for our possible trip to Hanoi.

He sent his messages to me by his body language. I could not figure out his. I gave up trying. I walked from one side to the other of my cell. The dim fluorescent lamp attracted ephemeras.

Three years and five months had a series of crises, but the crises turned out not so bad in the last moment. I hoped that to be the case again this time. I missed my sister. She should have written a letter to the President of the International Red Cross for my return under the North Korean agents' pressure. She knew I was in a Vietnam prison. How painful that fact must be to her! She was acting as my mother when I lost my mother. I was only eight then. The 38th parallel in Korea and 17th parallel in Vietnam were symbols of human tragedy. Why did tragedy come to me and my sister? When my sister appeared in front of me, I would close my eyes. I made it clear again that I had to kill myself before she came to me.

I sat down on the concrete floor. I knelt and prayed. I was completely alone from my sister, wife and children.

The bell was ringing. It was bed time.

Two mice woke me up. They fell into water jars next to the dishes. I hated snakes and mice, but I "rescued" two mice. They were better than I was.

October 1 - Sunday (Morning): I did not expect any interrogation Sunday. The Cheekbone's aide again visited me. That meant another interrogation.

I talked to him:

"There is no use. Why do you take me there? How long will this last?"

He said:

"You didn't answer them. So do it again. As long as they want you, we'll take you to them."

I should remain as a man. When the right times come, I should die. My determination made my anger soften. But I had to resist the North Koreans' plot to take me there.

"As I told you yesterday, they plan to take me to North Korea. Your government should stop it according to the international law."

He told me:

"You are the the South Korean agent and that your sister is in North Korea.

He knew everything. The Cheekbone and the North Korean agents had close communication everyday.

"What are you talking about? I'm a UN-recognized diplomat. I shall not go to North Korea."

The fifth interrogation began:

"Your sister was crying over those rubber shoes. She was very thoughtful of you. You have to see your parents grave. You have not seen it for so long."

Next question was:

"Why did you take your brother and his wife to South Korea? Their lives in South Korea are miserable as you may well know. You should have kept them in North Korea."

Next question was interesting:

"You don't plan to marry again? North Korea has many beautiful women you can choose. When you are 60, we'll celebrate it. Please don't miss this opportunity."

He offered me a cigarette. I did not accept his cigarette. He provided Vietnam cola, juice and North Korean cigarettes, and I did not accept their offer.

I closed my ears with my hands. I looked outside the window. White clouds, sparrows, sky--they were peaceful.

The senior person told me:

"I'll talk about your sister's family. One nephew is manager of a farm and the other a tractor-operator.

"I'll recite a poem."

He picked up a piece of paper and read:

"How are you? Long time has passed away. How is Tak Yong?"

That was not a poem, but my sister's letter. Tak Yong was my brother in Seoul. The was the beginning of the letter.

I didn't care. They threatened, appeased and mixed their two approaches.

October 2 (Morning): The sixth interrogation.

Nothing was new. I stared at their eyes. The senior person told me:

"You don't speak here. You have to open your mouth soon."

That indicated my Hanoi trip.

I laughed at him.

Nothing worked for them.

The seventh interrogation in the afternoon.

"Why do you accept us as your enemy?"

They seemed to give up their hope.

The senior person repeated the same questions again.

I closed my ears with my hands.

He suddenly raised his voice and said:

"You now know. You choose one out of three."

I did not hear what he said. I was quiet. I didn't care.

"It's O.K. You kept silence. Silence is admittance"

You agreed to go to North Korea.

"Why is silence admittance? I rejected everything. I'd rather die here. I don't want to go to North Korea. Why don't you understand me?"

I came out of the room. The policeman escorted me downstairs. Two Vietnamese officers were there probably for a discussion of my case with the North Korean agents.

The Cheekbone's aide escorted me to the prison.

Since September 25, my secret network with President Lee had been out. Mr. Ahn might be keeping the network with him.

On October 1, I sent him a message "Contact with Korean government" in body language. On October 2, I sent him a message "Contact quickly with Korean government," and "ask the UN to interfere with our case."

I didn't know whether he understood my body language messages. I just hoped he had already sent messages to the Korean government.

October 2: The North Korean agents questioned Mr. Suh:

"Mr. Suh Byung Ho, you owe us an apology, don't you?"

Mr. Suh said, "None."

They said, "You can go now."

I guessed they'd like to hear Mr. Suh's apology for his shouting in the last interrogation.

I commented, "You did a good job."

President Lee was very adjustable to changing situations. I knew his ability. In a week or two, he could send us secret messages again.

October 2 (Afternoon): Mr. Suh sent me good news. President Lee contacted Mr. Suh and asked him to send a letter which would be sent to the South Korean government. Mr. Suh asked me to write a letter by October 3.

October 3, 1978: I wrote a long letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, South Korea. The contents were:

"From September 25 to October 2, we were subject to the Norther Koreans' interrogation. We fought back. We kept our silence to their questions. Our determination to kill ourselves if we are forced to go to North Korea. Wish great prosperity to South Korea."

I sent it to Mr. Suh in the afternoon of October 3.

No interrogation the next 4 days. The trip to Hanoi, the worst possible thing, worried us.

October 6: We were out of solitary confinement. We retruned to Mr. Ahn's room, Room #6 on the fourth floor of the BC building. Nothing was told on our possible trip to Hanoi or to Pyungyang.

Showers. Washing clothes. At the water tank, Vietnamese prisoners greeted us. Women prisoners showed their welcome gesture to us. One women wrote "Hi" and bowed to us.

We discussed our future.

The North Korean agents called me "You," Mr. Suh "Mr. Suh Byung Ho," and Mr. Ahn "Sir." It was interesting. They had a good amount of our background inspection.

Mr. Suh told me:

"Minister Rhee, look at the ducks. They are big."

There were three ducks Lt. Mao was feeding. He told us he planned to use them for his holiday dinner table in 4 months.

Would it be our fate to go to Hanoi before the ducks disappeared in 4 months? That's my fate? What's next? Dark clouds were hanging over the sky.

Chapter 5: Banana Plant

I checked my baggage in the afternoon after siesta and found my diary notebook missing. The diary contained events from January 1, 1979 to September 24. Mr. Ahn told me that he burnt it after my signals to prepare our departure to Hanoi. He understood my messages well, even though I was not sure he did. He picked up such messages as "North Koreans are here," "Firm resistance," "Silence," "Prepare for Hanoi trip," "Contact with the Korean government," and "Call for the UN intervention." He had already sent 2 messages to South Korea on September 26, one on September 30, October 1 and October 2. I could understand his act of burning the diary for our "security."

October 9, 1979: A friendly Vietnamese guard advised me to write a petition to the high-ranking Vietnamese official not to send me to North Korea. He drafted a petition for me. I wanted to thank him for his kindness, but I did not do so. I did not want to show my weakness to the Communists.

I was ready to die, but I was scared. Days and nights passed away. I was still treated as a privileged prisoner in the prison.

Women prisoners in the ID building made communication with male prisoners in the BC building. Some women sent an inspiring message, "revolt" to men. Most women sent romantic messages. Some men responded to them. Some women fell in love with the guards. They could be physically closer. The guards stayed until late. Under the dim light, they expressed love.

The wife of South Vietnam's 33rd Air Force Unit Commander fell in love with Tomato, a young strong guard. Her husband was the right-hand man of Vice President Ky in 1968. She previously had another lover who lost his front tooth. She threw a pair of underwear with a piece of stone at him. Her act was caught. She was sent to solitary confinement for a few days. Her lover was sent to the labor camp.

Tomato was 15 years younger than she was, but he acted as her husband and she as his wife. Their passionate love ended with his transfer to the labor camp on October 17.

All women in the prison acted in that fashion except for President Thien's sister-in-law. Another romance was noteworthy. A young woman in her 20's with her 3-year old daughter fell in love with the male nurse of the BC building. Their romance began last July. The male nurse, the North Vietnamese Army Sergeant, saw the most beautiful woman in his jungle life, his long guerrilla life. No one seemed to match their love affairs.

Yang, the North Vietnamese Army Sargent, had the "power" and good heart so that he was quite popular. He was friendly with Korean diplomats.

He collected food and daily necessities for her. Koreans' presents to him went to her--medicines, soups, cookies and Korean sweet rice cake.

There was the Chiwha Prison Clinic next to the ID building. The male nurse made many excuses to visit the clinic. Whenever he went to the clinic, he passed a word to her. He admitted patients to the clinic in the night. Many prisoners suffered from skin diseases and tuberculosis. He could pick the patient every night for admittance to the clinic. Of course, he should justify emergency admittance.

On the way to the clinic, he sent a message to the beautiful woman, "Mother with a daughter." On the way out, he met the woman. There was a wicket through which the man and woman could kiss and touch each others face. Three couples--the male nurse and the young mother with a daughter, the Air Commander's wife and Tomato, "Boss", secretary of the BC building and a former Vietcong woman soldier--used the wicket as their place of love. The three couples rotated the use of the wicket.

An old guard who was not lucky to have a lover, reported the love affairs. The officer of the building closed the wicket. No more kisses and touches.

The male nurse destroyed the barrier and continued their love affairs, limited love affairs. Other lovers were sent to a solitary confinement cell. The North Vietnam Army Sargeant had enough power to continue his love affairs.

The officer of the ID building made a permanent closing of the wicket. The Army Sargeant could not destroy it. So he continued his platonic love. The 3-year old imitated her mother's writing without knowing what those writings means.

We watched the love scenes as if we were watching love scenes in the movies. Prisoners needed romantic affairs for their mental relaxation.

However, romantic lovers soon disappeared. Some women were released and some were transferred to the labor camp. Two women were moved to another building.

October 26, 1978: The young mother with the daughter left the ID building. She was the last prisoner in that building. We were then placed there.

The ID building had been used for foreign prisoners in Thien's South Vietnam. The first floor had a shower room and a flush toilet. The second floor had two bedrooms; one inside had 4-pyung and the other outside had 11-pyung. Near the steps, a half-moon shaped hallway made the building look nice and neat. Only this building in the prison had a flush toilet. The toilet was old, but it was better than the other toilets we used.

The female prisoners' building until the days siesta had aluminum and stainless wash bowls, common property of all the prisoners. There was one toothbrush left in the shower room. Who left the brush? The Air Commander's wife, Tien, President Thien's sister-in-law, or the young mother with a daughter--left it there.

All lost South Vietnam and became political prisoners. Families were separated. Freedom and private property disappeared. Women is despair were thirsty for love. I wished them best luck.

I could see the blue sky from the outside room. I enjoyed watching the clouds and pigeons flying. I had a good instinct not to go to North Vietnam and/or North Korea. But nothing was certain. I was still a prisoner. Lien told me such a pessimistic future sometime before.

The building had many mice. They were not afraid of us. Women prisoners could not bother the mice. We started to kill them. We made a trap. Trapped mouth was killed by Mr. Suh. Big cockroaches were killed by Mr. Suh also. Thousand of ants were killed by Mr. Ahn.

One night we killed a rat and threw it to the ground. The next morning the prisoners cooked it as meat. They asked us not to kill the rats so cruelly, because the taste would not be as good. They told us the rat was as good as chicken.

November 1, 1978: A message from the Minister of South Korean Foreign Affairs arrived through a secret network. That was the first message from the South Korean government. The message contained:

First, we are negotiating with Vietnam and the North Korean representatives for your release.

Second, no one will be sent to North Korea against his will.

Third, do not surrender to North Koreans' threat.

Don't agree with them on the proposed trip.

The message did not indicate the place of the negotiations, time and list of delegates. But we could understand the third-party nation arranged the meeting. We were glad to know an international meeting for our release was going on, and pleased to know that we would not be sent to North Korea against our will. It is illegal to kidnap diplomats. It is not wrong for them to choose a country against their own country, however. Once we agreed with the North Korean agents, we didn't have any choice.

The Korean government's letter relieved us from anxiety. How long would the meeting last? That was our question. And we wished that we would arrive in Seoul before Christman.

The North Koreans and Vietnam were the last negotiable people, so that we worried about the long dragged out meeting and long dragged out prison life. No rosy picture yet! We just wished for the meeting's early ending.

Mr. Ahn read a newspaper article which told about the departure of the North Korean Ambassador. Mr. Kim Sang Joo was leaving Hanoi, and the acting Ambassador would replace him. It was early November.

Ambassador Kim had stayed more than 10 years in Hanoi. After the downfall of South Vietnam, he pressured the Communist Vietnam to stop all Koreans' departure from Vietnam. He was the chief architect of the present status of many South Koreans imprisonment. That was a well known fact.

April 30, 1975: Three North Korean agents arrived at Saigon to start their operation--approaching all Koreans and brainwashing them with Communism.

The Vietnamese who assisted the North Korean agents were the Cheekbone, Captain Hong and interpreter Duong Chi Truk. Duong Chi Truk's uncle, Bou Thuan Than, guided the North Koreans sightseeing, shopping and with their settling down in Saigon.

Ambassador Kim Sang Joon's group threatened that the South Koreans in Saigon be killed, imprisoned or permanently crippled. Many Koreans simply accepted its threatening instruction and left for North Korea.

His first goal was to make high-ranking South Koreans turn to North Korea; and his second goal was to train most South Koreans to be spies for North Korea and to wait for the "explosive chance" in South Korea. They asked the trained South Koreans to organize a mutual assistance group in South Korea and to work together with North Korean agents dispatched to South Korea.

North Korea supported Cambodia over the Cambodia and Vietnam disputes in mid 1977. It was inevitable for North Korea and Vietnam to depart from their long honeymoon years. In October 1978, Ambassador Kim was leaving and only the acting ambassador remained in Hanoi. That meant a significant conflict between Hanoi and Pyongyang. Anyway, that conflict helped us to go back to Seoul.

After a few days, I talked to Mr. Ahn:

"Mr. Ahn will we go home before we eat bananas from that plant?"

There was a young banana plant. Banana flowers would bloom and bunches of bananas would ripen. It would take 6 months.

Mr. Ahn was optimistic:

"Three nations' meeting for our release, and Ambassador Kim's return to Pyongyang will make our homecoming sooner."

Mr. Suh commented from his straw mat:

"Of course, we'll be home before the banana is ripe."

I agreed with them.

On November 14 and December 7, I sent a report to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and a letter to my wife via secret network.

December 25, 1978: Vietnam invaded Cambodia and controlled Phnom Pehn on January 9. It was an easy victory.

The Hanoi government then purged Vietcong leaders. Some prison officers of the ED and ID buildings were ousted between January 25 and February 5. Ten were gone and only three remained. They just did custodians work. Former Vietcong became a laughing stock to the North Vietnamese.

There was a reason why the Vietcong leaders were purged. Vietcong officers knew freedom and democracy. They were economically better off than North Vietnam officers. The two forces were eventually on a collision course.

I asked a question to a former Vietcong Police Lieutenant who came to inspect our place: "How are you?"

He sighed and told me over a pack of cigarettes I offered. "I had had 20 years revolutionary work in the jungle. There I had three meals a day. Now, I'm hungry, starved to death."

I asked him how much he earned.

"85 dong (about \$6.00)."

"How much rice do you get from rationing?"

"8 Kg with barley and flour."

One Kg of rice in the Ho Chi Minh City market was 11 dong (about 80 cents). One pack of American cigarettes was 30 dong. So his pay might be less than 3 packs of cigarettes. It was understandable why he was hungry.

It was confidential talk between us. They, former Vietcong officers, trusted us. One police captain told President Lee that if there was freedom like under Thien, the Communist regime could not survive a single day. Most citizens were hungry and depressed. President Lee wrote about the discontent in Ho Chi Minh City in his letter to me.

The North Vietnamese did not know what freedom was, looked like or meant. The Vietcongs did. That's why they could not completely trust the Vietcong

North Vietnam soldiers replaced the Vietcong officers in the prison.

Seventeen hundred South Vietnamese in Guam returned to Vietnam several months after they had left Saigon. They had hopes of seeing their relatives, friends and homeland under the new regime. Their hopes were shattered. They were all sent to a prison in the northern Canhwa Province jungle. Many escaped the prison and many attempted to break. So the Vietnam government dispersed them in all prisons in the nation. I met a young South Vietnamese Army Lieutenant in the Chiwha Prison. He had hopes of generous treatment because his father, a Communist party member, had been killed by the French Army. He

was trained in the United States, so he could speak to us in English. He was depressed. Vietnam was not generous to pardon him.

Col. Hai's wife was a Math teacher in a junior high school. She earned 55 dong (\$3.70). She could not send anything to her husband in prison. He was dying. He once told me:

"I never imagined this kind of Communism. I regret now, but it is too late."

I met two Vietnamese who escaped Vietnam on April 26, 1975, landed in Korea, moved to Guam, and returned to Ho Chin Minh City. Family reunion was what they dreamed of. But it was a dream. They were in the Chiwha Prison with other political inmates. They did not receive anything from outside, and were starved. They wanted our prison food that we did not consume.

February 17, 1979: Chinese Army attacked Vietnam. North Korea supported China. Our hope was enhanced from the war.

March 22: Lt. Wen, a strong man from North Vietnam was fired from his prison position. He asked and received money and jewelry from the families of the prisoners. He was guilty and dismissed. However, Wen was not the only one. Almost everyone was paid for carrying letters and messages to the families and back to the prisoners.

Cost of one letter carrying or delivery was 100 dong to 200 dong in 1976, 60 dong (\$4.00) to 100 dong in 1977, 30 dong to 50 dong in 1978 and 20 dong in 1979.

Life in Vietnam was getting miserable. The prison officers maintained their lives from moonlighting "mail man's job." I could witness their poverty in their underwear. On every national holiday, the prison held volleyball games. Their underwear was made of the U.S. flour bag. Their uniforms and clothes were worn out. Not wearable. We were surprised to see their poverty-stricken lives. They looked like baggers.

April 27, 1979: Former Prime Minister Quat died in his room, Room #5 on the second floor of the E building. He was the second Prime Minister to die in Chiwha Prison.

May 1979: Duong Chi Tuk, Korean translator in Vietnam Foreign Ministry, arrived in Ho Chi Minh City with 5 North Korean agents. He visited his Uncle Bon Thuan Than in Room #6 on the second floor of E building in Chiwha Prison.

Vietnam still had ties with North Korea. I informed the situation to President Lee.

May 15: President Lee was arrested by Vietnam police and interrogated. He was free. A high-ranking government official helped him. He was released on May 18.

Since then, I had heard news that Duong and North Korean agents returned to Hanoi. Than disclosed the news to me.

I did not hear of any progress report on the negotiation for our release. I sensed something wrong.

May 5: I developed a skin disease and was given medicine. The medicine did not work and it got worse. On June 18, Doctor Than in the prison, gave me a prescription. I received medicines from Korea. In August my skin disease was cured.

At the same time, I had a toothache again. I could not eat. Mr. Suh made soup. White ginseng from Korea did not help.

Last November, we were optimists.

The banana plant had provided bananas and had already been cut out. I remember how Mr. Ahn and Mr. Suh answered to my question, "Will we go home before we eat bananas from that plant?" Now we had lost our confidence.

August 16, 1979: Mr. Suh was sick.

August 22, 1979: Dr. Than, another political prisoner, declared Typhoid Fever. His fever ran very high. There was no medicine in the prison clinic. The doctor gave him a shot. He used all our medicines from Korea.

Mr. Ahn was washing Mr. Suh's underwear and undershirts every day and cleaning his dishes. I was thankful for Mr. Ahn's care and sacrifice.

Two years in prison brought complete equality among the inmates. Former Prime Minister, cabinet members, men in the street were all equal. No one was superior over others. All were equal inmates. We were different. Mr. Suh, Mr. Ahn and Mr. Choi Ki Sun showed their loyalty to me. We had preventive shots. It took one or two weeks for us to gain immunity. We were scared of possible contamination. Mr. Suh suffered from high fever. Dr. Than, officers and female nurses visited Mr. Suh twice a day.

His fever became normal on August 25. All the medicines and antibiotics from Korea worked for us. President Lee supplied all the medicines. He ate normal meals on August 31.

Dr. Than was freed on September 1 because his wife gave gold to a high-ranking Vietnam official. He knew all the events outside the prison from his secret network, and told us of his freedom on that date.

I continued to send messages to the South Korean government and family, and received mail once every 3 months from my wife. She did not mention the negotiation about our release.

I looked outside. Banana plants showed their fresh leaves. I was in pain from my tooth, bored and tired.

New punishment was devised to the women prisoners in buildings F and G.

The women who waved their hands out the lattice strip were handcuffed outside the bar. Their hands were cuffed outside and their bodies were inside the bar. It was a cruel punishment. The men also had the same punishment. They had to urinate while standing beside the bar. Some men stayed all day.

Another cruel punishment was hand standing. The prisoners who violated the prison rule would stand on their hands. Their feet were buffed to the bar. Not many prisoners could stay more than 5 or 10 minutes. They lost consciousness. Then, nurses helped them to recover. Some did not recover and died. Some bodies were buried in the prison cemetery. Some bodies were returned to their families. No one could complain about death or burial policy. Anti-Communists did not have rights to speak out.

A former South Vietnam Army Colonel killed himself in the D building. His wife was crying over the body delivered. Chin Quang Ruk, a Chinese guard, himself cried with his wife. I heard it from Chin.

Between January to October 1979, about 3,000 prisoners in buildings AH, BC and G were sent to labor camps in Mecong Delta Wumin, Ham Than and Ther Ining areas. Once they left the Chiwha Prison, new political prisoners arrived, so the prison was always crowded. New prisoners went through inspection. All their baggage was totally inspected.

One whole family came to the prison. A couple in their thirties with a 16-year old daughter, 13-year old daughter, 10-year old daughter, 8-year old son and a baby. When they left for labor camp, the 16-year old daughter was separated from the rest of the family. Different locations made the family cry. They could not complain about the separation of their family. Mr. Suh and Mr. Ahn showed their tears on the scene. There were many said events in prison.

September 27, 1979: Former North Vietnamese intelligence officer prisoned in Room #6, second floor of E building.

Quang told the following to Mr. Ahn at the water tank area.

1. My nephew Duong came to Ho Chi Minh city from Hanoi on September 17. He is going to do "business" (operation) here.
2. He came to visit me with gifts. My wife came on September 21.
3. In May, he came with 5 North Korean agents and stayed one month in Ho Chi Minh City and returned to Hanoi. This time the North Korean agents did not come with him.
4. The North Korean agents requested further interrogation of Korean diplomats, but the Vietnam government rejected their requests.

Than provided accurate information to us. Mr. Ahn give him soaps, medicine and cigarettes for the information.

Mr. Ahn had a gum problem and his kidneys did not function well. Mr. Suh was neurotic. All three were sick.

October 28, 1979 - 6:00AM: I was watching the ground from upstairs. Mr. Ahn and Mr. Suh were doing something on their mats. I noticed a small crowd on the ground. One told me in a faint voice in broken English: "Park Chung Hee died. President Park Chung Hee died." It was just a joke to me.

Once in a while, they joked to the Korean diplomats. I doubted what I heard.

"Park Chung Hee killed. President Park Chung Hee killed." Next inmates acted, "Shooting by pistol" All were serious. It could not be a joke.

I asked them, "When?" "Who killed him?"

Mr. Ahn interpreted for me.

They told me they watched TV last night and the TV news showed the assassination. They quickly moved to their cells.

A Chinese-Vietnamese came and explained the incident. Coupdetat in Seoul on October 26. In the night, Park was killed.

We could not trust the Vietnam news media. But we could believe in the news.

The death of Park worried us.

"Does South Korea overcome this crisis?"

"Does the South Korean military maintain unity against the North Korean attack?"

"Do the South Korean politicians act wisely over their private political ambition?"

I owed a lot to President Park. I could not return to him.

President Lee sent me a note about President Park's personal care of me in July 1977. President Park discussed my case at the cabinet meeting.

"Is Minister Rhee healthy?"

President Park showed tears at the meeting. That news was relayed to President Lee and to me.

I didn't show tears to anyone. I cried often in the prison. I didn't show my crying to Mr. Suh and Mr. Ahn. The assassination news made me cry. I brought my dirty clothes downstairs to the shower room and cried alone.

I received a letter from President Lee which described the assassination in detail. He compiled information from the Voice of America, BBC and Australia broadcasting.

I wrote a report to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, South Korea, which expressed my best wishes to new acting President Choi Kyu Ha.

November 20, 1979: I faced my 5th birthday in the prison. President Lee sent me a birthday cake and Mr. Suh cooked Chinese food, but I was not happy.

December 11, 1979: I received official inauguration news of President Choi Kyu Ha from President Lee and sent President Choi congratualtions from 3 Korean diplomats with our current prison situation.

December 12: Mr. Choi Ki Sun moved to our ID building from Room #5, on the second floor of the E building.

More depressing news. The North Korean agents would come on December 15 to interrogate Korean diplomats individually in Building D. More than a few prisoners in the ED building informed us of their coming. The news was trustworthy.

We prepared ourselves for another round of their interrogation. We sent the news to President Lee. The news was wrong. Foreign visitors on December 17 were not North Koreans. Our 4-day preparation was over.

The second banana plant grew and produced bananas. The year of 1979 eclipsed. No progress report from the negotiation was available to us.

Jaunary 1, 1980: I got up a 5:00. Physical exercise and a shower were my morning activities. I asked 3 young Koreans to prepare a New Year's Day ceremony before dawn.

We stood up in order of myself, Mr. Suh, Mr. Ahn and Mr. Choi Ki Sun who were dressed up in long pants and shirts. We sang the National Anthem and prayed in the direction of home town. We prayed for South Korea and that our families be prosperous and healthy. We shook hands and wished the best to each other.

"Let's not betray our home country. Let's endure and overcome all the difficulties."

We celebrated New Year's Day with secretly-distilled liquor. Mr. Suh distilled it. All the materials came from President Lee. My toothache prevented me from drinking.

I set up a division of work among 4 Koreans.

Myself. Cleaning up toilet, cleaning up couch, catching mice and flies.

Mr. Suh. Cooking, distilling liquor, cleaning room, killing cockroaches and killing the trapped mice.

Mr. Ahn. Maintaining foods, medicines and other necessities from the outside, snacks and ant-killing.

Choi Ki Sun. Water carrying and dishwashing.

January 18, 1980 - (7:00 in the morning): The Education Officer of the prison came to us and requested the following.

First, state your "reform" in 1979 according to the four guidelines issued by the Vietnam Communist Republic.

Second, state your plan to "reform" in 1980 according to the four guidelines issued by the Vietnam Communist Republic.

Third, state your particular opinion.

I denied to comply with their request.

"I don't intend to comply with your request because I'm a diplomat who is protected by the Vienna Agreement."

Mr. Ahn translated my English into Vietnamese.

I signed.

Mr. Ahn and Mr. Suh made similar statements.

January 28, 1980: Mr. Suh had a toothache. "Minister Rhee, we have to go home. It has been too much." His face looked ugly because of his toothache. We were all sick. How long will we remain here? I didn't think U.S. Col. Tucker (reserved) expected his death in this prison and his burial in the prison cemetery. But he died and was buried on this place. What did he dream of in his last several months? His homecoming turned out to be just a dream. He might have realized that it was just an unfulfilled dream in his last several weeks of life.

It was midnight. I could not sleep. For the first time I took valium. I had never taken medicine for sleep. President Lee sent it sometime before.

As I discussed earlier, the prison clinic was next door to our place. The clinic had President Thien's sister-in-law and her former husband. They were separated in their forties. After the fall of Vietnam, they were arrested and imprisoned individually. They met in the prison. The old man could not move freely since August 1978. Three years' imprisonment was long enough to the man. Someone should be with him around the clock. The prison authorities ordered his former wife to be with him. That's human fate. They had been separated a long time and their reunion was made possible as a nurse and a patient. The man relied heavily on her. He was a vegetable human being. Only

his heart-beat proved he was alive. I couldn't understand why the prison still kept him there. He was not the only one. There were more than a few fatally ill people in the prison. The Vietnam government should let them leave rather than keep them. Arresting was so easy and freeing was so difficult.

"The rich man's fortune stays another 3 years" was an old Korean maxim. This prison maintained its supplies in the first 3 years after the demise of South Vietnam. Since 1979, no light bulb has been supplied. We, the Koreans, were supplied from President Lee.

What the Koreans needed was vegetables. Vegetables were not allowed. But we could receive some. Even a small quantity of vegetables could not be maintained fresh for more than 48 hours. We were lacking vitamins.

We acquired vegetables e.g., sweet potatoes from other inmates in exchange of our cigarettes, cookies, ramen and soap. That was not the prison's acceptable behavior. We received a warning notice from the prison authority. Our Vietnam friends received more serious punishment.

On January 27 I sent letters to President Choi Kyu Ha, Gen. Kim Yong Hum, Minister of General Administration and my classmate at the Korean West Point, Gen. Kim Jong Whan, Minister of Home Affairs, my senior officer, and to Gen. Lee Hi Sung, Army Chief of Staff and martial law commander, my junior officer and classmate of Army Staff College.

On January 30, Mr. Suh complained:

"Minister Rhee, the South Korean government lost interest in us. South Korea is in turmoil. They cannot afford to take care of us. We might never return to Korea."

I could not predict the future.

January was wet unlike other Januarys' in Vietnam. The grass grew 30 cm in a week.

January 31, 1980 - 7:30AM: Four Koreans went out for sunbathing. The place was in front of the ED building headquarters. Sunbathing was allowed for 10 to 15 minutes. Our sunbathing was 60 to 70 minutes.

I could see edible grasses near our sunbathing place. I hesitated to pick up the grass. My pride bothered my act. No one was nearby. Mr. Bao and his inmates were cultivating a vegetable garden 80 meters away from us. Bao was the guard who distributed food and soup in buildings A and B. He had been the North Vietnam Army Sargeant who fought against South Vietnam and became a POW. He chose to remain in South Vietnam in 1973. After the fall of South Vietnam, he was arrested and sent to this prison.

He gave me salt on September 13, 1976. He was kind to me. I was quiet. He paid attention to a quiet Korean. He gave me extra in my bowls.

He saw me picking up the wild edible grasses. What did he see? "It is strange. The Korean never said he was hungry. He was tough. He was proud of himself. Why does he pick up wild grasses?"

He brought a bundle of vegetables. He told me he was permitted to offer these vegetables from his supervisor. He assured me that I could receive the vegetables. The vegetables filled one-third of a bucket.

February 11, 1980: Eleven out of about 1,000 in buildings E and D were freed. Their Communist relatives helped them to be free. Eleven included a 72-year old man in Room #24 on the first floor of the ED building. He asked me to give him a lighter 3 days before. I gave him one. He said in broken English, "Thank you, Thank you."

The 74-year old man was not freed. He was confined to Room #7 on the second floor of the E building. His freedom seemed remote because he was known as a strong Anti-Communist. He was from North Vietnam. He worked for a weather bureau in the French administration, and retired from the bureau as the Director.

When the nation was divided along the 17th parallel in 1954, he came to South Vietnam. His married daughter remained in North Vietnam. After the liberation in 1975, she visited her parents in Saigon and was shocked to see her father. She looked too old for her age. Their reunion made him a fervent Anti-Communist.

The old man's anger over his daughter's painful years in North Korea was understandable. She made him an Anti-Communist. He was arrested and sent to this prison as a political prisoner.

The 74-year old man, weighed only 35 kg and ate two meals the prison provided with his false teeth. He was sympathized by all the inmates.

February 11: I lost my fingernails. New nails recovered color since I moved to a "regular" room and had sunshine. Then my nails were inflamed again. Out of 10 fingers, only my 2 thumbs and 1 finger on my right hand were normal. Nails were very soft, like rubber. My athlete's foot was painful on parts of my body. Medicines were not effective.

February 27, 1980: Foreign Minister Par Dong Jin sent me a letter which contained the President's message.

1. President Choi received your letter dated December 11, 1979.
2. The following are his messages to you:
 - (a) We praise your courageous battle against North Korean agents.
 - (b) Our government has been doing its best for your release.
 - (c) The Vietnam government indicated your release last year, but did not release.
 - (d) We will continue to do our job to release you from the prison. Maintain good health.

The letter gave me enormous hope, even though it did not say anything certain. Nothing was predictable.

My toothache bothered me again.

March 14 - 1:30PM: I laid down on the mat. The guard took Mr. Suh and Mr. Ahn to the headquarters. When Mr. Suh was arrested on June 19, 1975, his two hundred million piastas (about \$1,300) were confiscated. The money was missing. The interrogators took the money. No one knew who got the money. Mr. Suh asked the prison authorities to find his money. In June 1976 and afterwards, no clear answer was given to him.

Suddenly, today, they called for Mr. Suh and Mr. Ahn's explanation of the situation. The Education Officer showed sincerity to recover that money.

Mr. Ahn wrote the situation in Vietnamese. Both Ahn and Suh signed on the paper. We thought they tried to solve unsolved problems.

When? When would we be free? Another banana season? The North Korean agents might come here again and kidnap all of us to North Korea, who knew?

March 16: My toothache was so painful that I took an Anacin tablet. I could sleep in the morning. Mr. Suh made soup and soft foods for me. I could not eat or drink. I could understand why 711 people committed suicide. Five teeth, particularly two back teeth on top and left side gave me pain, unendurable pain. I did not know what to do. I just hoped the pain would disappear tomorrow and I could have a day of freedom from the pain.

March 25 - 1:00AM: I tried to take the teeth out, but failed, and took medicine to soothe the pain which would hurt my stomach. I wrote a letter to the prison authorities about my teeth. Mr. Ahn translated my words into Vietnamese:

To: ED Building Supervisor
Chiwha Prison

Toothaches have bothered me since March 1977. I have eased the pain with painkillers, but for the last week the painkillers have not worked. I believe a professional dentist should fix my teeth. Please arrange for a dentist in the prison to see my case, or an outside dentist if the prison does not provide a dentist. I'll write to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, if necessary, for the outside dentist.

I signed the letter and sent it to the Supervisor via the guard. I overdosed on the painkillers on March 31 in order to reduce the pain. That was the only way for me.

April 1, 1980 - 2:00PM: Mr. Hong, section head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2 Home Affairs officials, the Cheekbone's aide and the Supervisor of the ED building visited our room and checked about our health and difficulties.

April 2, 1980 - 8:00AM: Mr. Ahn saw a Police Lieutenant standing outside our building. He was our secret network linkage. I sent him a signal indicating no letter to President Lee. He sent us a signal indicating President Lee's letter to us. I went downstairs and stood up near the entrance. The wicket was completely closed as discussed earlier, so he could push the mail under the door. Two to 3 cm space was the channel of our secret communication.

He knocked the bar several times. That meant he was there. I knocked the bar several times. That meant he should push the mail through. I got it. I knocked the bar several times. That meant I received it. He left. I read the letter. President Lee sent us two letters dated on March 31 and April 1. Summarizing the two letters was:

1. A high-ranking Vietnam official's wife visited President Lee in the night of March 31. She told him that Hanoi sent a telegram to a Ho Chi Minh City foreign affairs man to release 3 Korean diplomats.
2. This is top secret. Some prison officials may use this information for your money, so be very careful.
3. President Lee met the high-ranking officials on April 1. He told Lee that you should be moving to another comfortable place for a few days good treatment, and sent to Korea. Choi Ki Sun will not be released.
4. He said "less than a month" for your release. No certain date, though.

I knew the high-ranking official and trusted his words because his information had been accurate. I believed there was a Hanoi decision to release us. However, this was not a free world. The decision could be reversed at any moment. Totally unpredictable world!

June 17, 1975: I had a permission to leave Thansannut Airport.

June 18, 1975: They stopped me there. I had to return to my place in Saigon. I was not sure until I arrived at Bangkok or Hong Kong.

Mr. Choi was sleeping during siesta. We could not sleep. We were excited and thrilled. I could not tell the information to Mr. Choi. The Education Officer took Mr. Choi to Room #7 on the second floor of the E building. It was 2:00PM.

April 3, 8:00AM: The Cheekbone's aide and a Police Lieutenant brought a desk and chairs to our room. We faced each other over the desk.

The Cheekbone's aid told us:

1. The other day we came to see you in order to check your health conditions.
2. Every year, every inmate should report his/her "reform" (of mind). You did in 1978 (July 17). You should report one.

3. Your report should contain:
 - (a) Name, address, hometown, date of birth.
 - (b) Education, occupation.
 - (c) The Vietnam Socialist Republic's humanitarian attitude toward war criminals.
 - (d) Your recommendation to the Vietnam Socialist Republic.

Mr. Ahn translated Vietnamese into Korean. I again protested the words, "War criminals." "Why are diplomats war criminals? We are diplomats as protected by international laws."

He knew what I said and did not react to me. The Police Lieutenant said in a sharp tongue:

"Your country with the U.S. sent army and ships against us. That's why you are war criminals."

"What are you talking about? Even the enemy nations should protect the diplomats. That's what the Vienna Agreement stipulated under the UN sponsorship. Your country signed on the agreement."

The Police Lieutenant continued:

"You did not engage in war activities but you arranged for South Korea to send troops to Vietnam. That's why you are war criminals."

Mr. Ahn commented:

"The Vietnam War was over with the Paris Agreement in 1973. It is not right to talk the war now."

"You know that UN diplomats are exempted from your law. If you insist we're war criminals, we cannot do anything on this paper."

I repeated the same statement for the last four and half years.

The Cheekbone's aide stopped the argument:

"Let's discuss that later. Today, you comment on our humanitarian policy."

I said:

"I'll write as I did in July 1978."

I wrote my comments on their humanitarian policy on July 15, 1978, so I copied it. And I added:

"The Korean diplomats appreciate your special care since October 26, 1978. The ED building has good facilities, shower room, bathroom and sufficient water."

They asked us to report anything inconvenient. They were nice. They wanted to keep a record showing that we had not been tortured and beaten. They also wanted to find out my occupational background. They did not know that we had already received the news about the telegram from Hanoi.

April 4, 7:00PM: The secret agent was standing outside our building. I put my hands into my pockets. That meant I had a letter to President Lee. He did not put his hands into his pocket. That meant he did not have a letter to us from President Lee.

I went downstairs and stood at the secret place. I held my small diary and a letter in a matchbox in my hands and waited for a rap.

Knock, knock, knock. I quietly pushed my diary and matchbox outside the bar. I was again relieved. I went upstairs.

April 6 - 6:00AM: Choi Ki Sun returned to our room. He was separated from us on April 2.

April 7 - 2:00PM: Mr. Ahn was asked to come to the headquarters office. Twenty minutes later, Mr. Suh was asked. I was asked to come last.

I met 4 officials from the Home Affairs and the Immigration Department at the education office.

They asked me to read what I wrote on April 3.

I read it. I just guessed that they might use the tape recording of my voice and statements that the Vietnam Socialist Republic treated war criminals fairly well. That was a part of immigration policy.

The departure process had begun. I filled out 3 forms and signed them. They needed 3 pictures, so I had to take instant pictures.

They said, "Now you are processing for your departure. But your departure to South Korea is not guaranteed. We recommend your departure, but the higher authorities will make the final decision. They were lying to me.

When I finished the process, Mr. Suh and Mr. Ahn were waiting outside the office. We returned to our room.

They took pictures of the room and the 4 of us on the straw mats. They could keep in the pictures their humanitarian policy toward 3 Korean diplomats.

The Vietnamese inmates looked at the events in our room and they shouted for joy, "You will be released. Free."

April 8 - 2:00PM: Mr. Ahn and Mr. Suh were asked to come to the headquarters office. Twenty minutes later, I was also asked. The Cheekbone's assistant and another officer faced the two Korean diplomats. I sat beside Mr. Ahn. Lt. Huin, the Cheekbone's aide declared that all belongings--Vietnamese

money, ID's, U.S. dollars were confiscated. They asked me to sign on the paper which declared that the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee arrested us and confiscated our IDs, cash, goods according to the Ho Chi Minh City laws and regulations.

I had \$320, 19 dong, camera, passport and a diplomats ID issued by South Vietnam and Vietnam Socialist Republic.

I talked to the Cheekbone's assistant:

"I cannot sign on this paper. You may confiscate your IDs, O.K. But why do you confiscate my money, pay from our government?"

" I'll sign on the paper saying that you confiscated my IDs, money and goods."

He already knew that I might use the paper against the Vietnam Socialist Republic.

"I cannot do that."

I told him: "Then I cannot sign."

Mr. Ahn interpreted our arguments.

He concluded: "You should explain why you cannot sign the paper and sign on it."

I responded: "O.K., I'll do it."

I wrote: "I dont agree with this paper. I am a diplomat. I'm exempted from this kind of paperwork."

Three sheets required my signatures. I suggested Mr. Ahn and Mr. Suh do the same.

April 10 - 8:00AM: We met 3 Vietnam officers. The Cheekbone's aide was replaced by another one. Beside him were Lt. Huin Van Long and interpreter Sat.

The senior officer talked to us, or lectured us and the interpreter translated his lecture into English. Then, he used Vietnamese. His lecture was focused on: "The Vietnam Socialist Republic is very humanitarian and generous. We can easily prove it. This city was expected bloodshed when South Vietnam fell into the hands of the Communists. But it was not. Peaceful transition."

And he continued his attack on us. "You hide many things from me. But we know everything about you."

"You became a South Korean general in 1971."

I answered:

"I don't need to answer or comment on your statement. I'm a diplomat protected by the Vienna Agreement."

I suggested to him:

"This kind of lecture is not good to us. Forge it!"

He said:

"I don't need your answer. I just want you to know we know everything."

His conclusion was:

"The Communist system is the most advanced political system on this earth. We are the most humanitarian people. We returned the U.S. pilots who bombed Hanoi to the U.S. We didn't kill the pilots. We didn't kill you, even though you should be executed."

His justification of confiscation was rather funny.

"You tend to deny the fact that we are the most humanitarian, so that we confiscated your belongings."

We kept our silence. No need of an argument. We returned to our room. He was mad at us.

3:00PM: We gave away our food, clothes and medicines to 16 prisoners. We had permission to do so. I gave away most of my belongings to Mr. Vie Van Trak who looked like my second son.

April 11: After a nap, I did physical exercises and running, and then took a shower.

2:00PM: Police Lt. Huin Van Long, immigration officer aide and Police Lt. Ryu Minh Ga, home affairs office aide, visited us with the supervisor of the ED building and 2 prison officers. We were asked to stand up in a row. Lt. Huin Van Long read a document.

Mr. Ahn translated for us. It's a statement of release. The order of release was signed by the inspector-general of Ho Chi Minh City as of April 11.

The contents of the order were:

"Implement the order of release of 3 Korean diplomats by the Commander of Chiwha Prison immediately."

My order was 002, Mr. Suh's order was 003, and Mr. Ahns order was 004. Order 001 could be for Secretary White of Great Britain. He was a British diplomat assigned to the United Nations. He was illegally imprisoned for 8 months and released.

The reading was over. Lt. Ryu Minh Ga asked me to pack everything in 15 minutes.

I asked him, "Should we keep mosquito nets and mats?"

He answered, "Yes, you carry them, but no food."

They didn't inspect our baggage. It was exceptional. We were ready to ride on the micro-bus in front of the ED building headquarters. Lt. Huin Van Long advised:

"You should say farewell to the officers."

I walked to the supervisor of the ED building and 4 other officers and shook their hands. I said "Good bye" to 7 or 8 guards.

The micro-bus started its engine. We were leaving the prison. I couldn't believe it.

Lt. Ryu Minh Ga told us:

"You are now free. We'll protect you until your departure. You will be at a safe place." It sounded as conditional freedom.

The van was passing through buildings A, B and D. I could not see the buildings well. I resisted crying. I didn't want to show tears to Vietnamese. The van entered the downtown, drove to the cross of Endo St. and Jung Minh St. and then to Tu Sun St. The van parked in front of a French-styled house. The two-story house was equally as good as President Thien's parental house at 81, Jung Minh St. The house was clean and orderly.

We were escorted upstairs. The bedroom of 12 pyung had one double bed and two single beds. The bathroom of 2 pyung next to the bedroom was neat, but the water pipe was old and water supply was not sufficient. I opened my baggage near the double bed and took a bath. I looked at my body for the first time in 5 years. I was tiny and tired.

Mr. Hong, Foreign Affairs section chief came to visit us. He told us:

"Tomorrow morning you will see a very important man. Probably after breakfast. You had better dress up. I'll be back 20 minutes before his arrival. You are now free. You can go anywhere you like."

"I don't have a necktie."

He said, "It's O.K., without a tie."

I told him, "You visited our prison on April 1. I still don't know your name and position. Are you the director of the Immigration Bureau?"

"I'm Hong, section chief of Foreign Affairs Department."

I expressed my desire to see President Lee Sune Hong and Madame Hoa in his house."

"He told me, "When the time comes, you will see them" He avoided an answer.

Mr. Hong returned to his office, but Lt. Huin Van Long and Ryu Minh Ga stayed in the room next to us. They watched and "protected" us.

The 2 officers came to our room at 5:00PM. They sat on the couch with a smile. I saw their smile for the first time. Lt. Ryu Minh Ga talked about 1 hour and 10 minutes about Vietnam's new economic plan and international cooperation.

He said that Vietnam had abundant land, minerals, forests, sea and water resources and emphasized resources exploration with international economic power. He suggested that South Korea could join in Vietnam's economic development. He tried to find similarities between Korea and Vietnam which were small countries under the rule of China and Japan. He said Vietnam was now making economic progress.

What a difference! He looked like a mad dog in the prison when he declared we were war criminals from South Korea. In the French-styled house, he became a gentle man with frequent smiles. He called South Korea the Republic of Korea.

I knew Vietnam's economic potential and its bright future. We exchanged economic ideas for Vietnam and Korea's economic cooperation.

Dinner was ready. Beer and a feast-like dinner for the 3 of us was equivalent to a formal dinner party at the embassy row.

There were two waitresses, both beautiful women. One was the Aozaid receptionist when we were interrogated by North Korean agents in September 1978 at 189 Kongli St.

In 18 months, she had been married and pregnant, but she was still a very beautiful woman.

Two police officers had supper outside and returned to the house. We enjoyed our 40-minute conversation in the living room. They gave their names to my request. They were hesitant in giving their names. I knew they did not reveal their names. I got their names in the living room, not before that. Both tried to please us. We were completely changed from war criminals to diplomats. They treated us as diplomats.

I took a bath, went to Veranda and went to bed at 9:00PM. I returned to a normal life and a normal bed after 5 years. I could not sleep. Around 10:00, I fell asleep.

April 12 - Saturday: It was a fine day. Who would be the VIP coming to see us? Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vietnam? He did not come before lunch.

I asked Lt. Ryn Min Ga: "Why is the VIP not yet here?"

He answered: "He will be here. Just late."

I asked him: "How long will we be here?"

He answered: "I cannot tell you the exact time, but not long." He avoided the exact time.

High Noon: We went to the dining room for lunch. Ham, eggs and beer. The kitchen was busy in preparing more food. Lunch was not planned. Last night's dinner and this morning's breakfast were well planned. Lunch was not expected to the kitchen people. We started our lunch.

Mr. Hong hurried to come here, and told us:

"A group of Swedish deputy foreign ministers will come here in 20 minutes to pick you up. You will leave Than San Nut Airport at 1:00PM. You will return to your country. Please finish your lunch and prepare for your departure."

I finished my ham, and prepared for my departure. My shoes were 6 years old. My shirts were 6 years old. My pants were 2 years old. President Lee sent these clothes to me in prison. I had a 10-year old suitcase and an 11-year old bag in my hands.

Mr. Hong, Lt. Ryu Minh Ga, Lt. Huin Van Long, Mr. Suh, Mr. Ahn and myself made a line to the downstairs. When we were in the living room, Mr. Rays friend, Swedish deputy foreign minister, Mr. Nielson, Chief of Staff of Swedish foreign minister, and a Southeast Asian representative of foreign business corp. arrived at the house.

Mr. Hong introduced them to us. I introduced Mr. Suh and Mr. Ahn to them. We sat down. Vietnam officers and Mr. Hong were 4 meters away from us.

The Southeast Asian representative gave me an envelop which showed:

To: Minister Rhee Dai Yong

On the back, the following words were written:

*Please give this letter directly to Minister Rhee Dai Yong in any case, not to others.