investigation has been recommended. In the latter case, he will have to undergo the process of interrogation and torture all over again from the beginning...

[In the next section of his report, omitted here, Mr. Ngo Cong Duc describes seven types of torture commonly used in South Vietnamese prisons and interrogation centers. -ed.]

PRISONERS

Since the launching of the Phoenix Program, there has been a rule that every locality must arrest a certain number of Vietcong and opposition people each month. The arresting process has become a subject of competition.*

Those with relatives in the National Liberation Front (N.L.F.) are the designated victims of these arrests. People who are relatively prosperous, who often show a hostile attitude toward the administration, families with beautiful daughters, people who have not succeeded in satisfying the demands of government officials, or have offended these officials in any way, are arrested one after another.**

In areas frequented by members of the N.L.F. or in areas where Saigon's troops have conducted operations, people in general are arrested in large numbers with the aim of "purification." The U.S.-Thieu administration not only carries out a policy of extermination by bombing people in areas where the N.L.F. are located, but returns to those places again to search out and arrest all the inhabitants.

Under savage torture in the Saigon regime's prisons, everyone is forced to implicate a certain number of other people; thus, the number of prisoners in South Vietnam increases rapidly especially during the months when the N.L.F. launches its offensives.

Worse, the torture of prisoners has ruined their health and in many cases, they die in prison. The lack of medicines and food is enough to kill those who are not in good health. Ho Ngoc Nhuan, a Congressman, spoke out about this situation in Saigon last November and asked for larger rations of medicine and food.

One percent of the Saigon administration's budget is allotted to give each prisoner about 50 piasters' worth of food per day [50 piasters is equivalent to 12 cents in U.S. currency at the official exchange rate - ed.]. Given the large number of prisoners, the ration per head cannot be much higher. By greasing palms, people with money can be authorized to receive extra food from their families. Most prisoners suffer from edema.

Most of the prisons are overcrowded; the space allotted to each prisoner is less than a square meter. Members of the Saigon House of Representatives revealed that at Can Tho, each prisoner is only allotted less than half a square meter. In Vinh Binh province, when they stretch, the prisoners have to put their legs on other people's bodies. The toilets are located right in the jail cells and stink horribly because of the lack of water. Prisoners' bodies exude such a strong smell that even the mosquitoes are driven away. The prisoners have to attend political indoctrination classes twice a week and whoever refuses to salute the Saigon flag is beaten and thrown into a "tiger cage."

Prisoners who can post a bond or offer a bribe are allowed to work as servants for the province chiefs, the chiefs of the justice section, the district chiefs, the provincial administrative heads, or the U.S. advisors.

* An article in the Washington Post (February 17, 1970) explained why quotas for Phoenix arrests had to be initiated. "Some local officials have made private accommodations with the Vietcong, the U.S. and Vietnamese officials say. They are unwilling to upset these arrangements by chasing VCI [Vietcong Infrastructure]." Quotas were set "to prod recalcitrant local officials" into arresting more N.L.F. members. A province chief is thus obliged to arrest a certain number of people to satisfy his superiors, whether or not he has enough evidence against them.--ed.

**Quaker staff reported meeting a young girl who had been imprisoned and tortured for having rejected the advances of an ARVN officer, who had friends in the police. For more details on these types of arrests, see Hostages of War, pp. 98-102. - ed.
The more arrests there are, the more this benefits members of the Saigon administration because they can get bribes from practically all the prisoners' families. The purpose of the bribes is to reduce the number of blows and to be allowed to receive food from one's family or to be released from prison. The prisoners' families are afraid that if no bribe is given, other members of the family will be arrested for being accomplices or for not having turned in people who should be turned in.

In South Vietnam, at least a million people have been put in prison [at one time or another — ed.], ranging from babies, prisoners' children and children less than 10 years old, to old people, 70 and 80 years old, who are almost blind but are nonetheless subject to beatings.

The U.S.-Thieu administration is afraid that if peace and democratic liberties were restored to South Vietnam, these million people would vehemently oppose them, and thus they do not wish to release them. As the international press and South Vietnamese politicians have revealed, their plan is to eliminate the prisoners physically. If world opinion cannot stop the elimination of the prisoners, I am convinced that the most barbaric practices will be adopted because the U.S.-Thieu forces will have proved that they can use the most cruel means to assassinate the Vietnamese people.

Over 200,000 people presently live in Saigon's prisons. No one can predict what will become of them; whether they will be released and when, or whether they will be taken to another place and murdered. No one can predict whether they will be reunited with their families or whether they will be taken back to the torture chambers.

Ngo Cong Duc
Stockholm, January 1973
PART V

Letters from Prisoners

Former Con Son prisoners who were left in small groups in Military Region III (see Section b below). The photo was taken by Dr. John Champ­­lin, a former U.S. Air Force doctor, who examined the ex-prisoners and confirmed that they had been paralyzed.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The letters in Sections a–c were smuggled out of South Vietnam by the Committee to Reform the Prison System of South Vietnam and published in Paris by the Vietnamese organization, Vietnamese Community. They describe conditions in South Vietnamese prisons and the measures taken against prisoners by the Thieu regime since the signing of the Paris Agreements.

a. Con Son

To the International Commission of Control and Supervision;
To the Four-Party Joint Military Commission

Dear Sirs:

We, more than 8,000 military and civilian prisoners jailed in Con Son Prison Island, have the honor to convey by this letter to the International Commission of Control and Supervision and to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission, our most urgent appeal for you to investigate the most brutal conditions under which we now live.

The articles of the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam and the protocol concerning the return of captured military and civilian personnel have not been seriously observed by the Saigon authorities and the U.S. government. We submit that they have not only not observed the provisions of the Agreement which they have signed, but also they have forced us to undergo even harsher and more cruel punishment.

1. Since the signing of the Agreements, the Saigon and U.S. authorities did not inform us of their contents. Furthermore, we had to endure humiliations and merciless beatings every time we talked about peace. On February 6, 1973, 200 political prisoners were taken to the Security Section. They were savagely interrogated [tortured - ed.]. They were chained day and night, and several received injuries from the beatings. Ho Van Hoanh, Nguyen Van Thuan and Nguyen Van Bon were among the seriously wounded.

2. Not only have the authorities prevented any information from reaching us, but they have also distorted the contents of the Agreements with false propaganda. Thus, confusion was spread among the prisoners to enable the authorities to step up their repressive measures and tighten their control over us.

Moreover, they sent their professional trusties, disciplinary agents selected from common criminals, to our jail cells to stir the pot with their provocations, thereby justifying their repressive practices. Their most extreme tactic, carried out in the first days of the New
Year, was to give orders to lock all cells and to throw us rotten fish for food. They over­
turned two tubs of excrement in each cell in Camp 8, calling them New Year presents. Camp 1
was sealed airtight. Camp 2 was visited by special police agents who dealt the prisoners
severe blows. In Camp 4 about 700 women were taken to the Public Security office where they
were beaten and forced to sign predated affidavits stating their defection to the government
side (the date given is prior to the signing of the Agreements) along with their fingerprints
and photographs. They had to affix their fingerprints and signatures to three documents.
Aside from their names and matriculation numbers, several blank spaces were left for the
authorities to fill in later corresponding circumstances. After the beatings, several women
are now gravely ill. They have received no treatment and are kept in narrow cells day and
night.

In short, our living conditions and our very lives are constantly and gravely threatened in
this prison.

3. Starting February 12, 1973, the authorities forced a number of old people, sick people
and women (about 300) to be relocated to an unknown place. Before boarding the plane, these
people were forced to sign affidavits stating their release from prison. We have not been
able to obtain any news of their present whereabouts. These practices have not ended. We
are refusing to leave this prison island except in the presence of the International Commis­
sion of Control and Supervision and the Four-Party Joint Military Commission.

4. On February 16, 1973, 400 political prisoners who had been jailed in Nha Trang were ex­
iled to Con Son Prison Island. They were forced to sign affidavits stating their release
from prison.

The practices cited in this letter constitute a very small part of all the brutalities and
deceptions the Saigon and U.S. authorities have inflicted upon us. Because we are subjected
to the most rigid controls, indecent living conditions and complete isolation, we only know
what the administration has in store for us.

These cruel and inhuman practices of the authorities are in violation of the provisions of the
Agreements. We who are imprisoned in Con Son firmly criticize these measures which are de­
signed to sabotage the Agreements. We must speak up to expose these brutalities to you, the
International Commission of Control and Supervision and the Four-Party Joint Military Commis­
sion, and to the public within our country as well as abroad.

We call upon you, the International Commission of Control and Supervision and the Four-Party
Joint Military Commission, to act swiftly to stop the bloody hand of the Saigon authorities
and the U.S. government so that our living conditions and our very lives may be protected.

Con Son, February 17, 1973
All the prisoners at Con Son

RECEIVED

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b. Con Son Ex-Prisoners

To the International Commission of Control and Supervision;
To the Four-Party Joint Military Commission

Dear Sirs:

We, patriots striving for peace, independence, neutrality, democracy and self-determination for South Vietnam, in the hope of seeing our country reunified one day, have been arrested, tortured, imprisoned and exiled by the Saigon authorities. For many long years, we have met oppression in the prisons of South Vietnam, especially at Con Son, where a number of our fellow

ADMINISTRATIVE TELEGRAM

From DIRECTOR OF CON SON REEDUCATION CENTER

To DIRECTOR OF SAIGON REEDUCATION CENTER

REPORT ON THE GENERAL SITUATION Number 040/TTCH/CS/CD/1
(From 7 a.m., February 19, 1973 to 7 a.m., February 20, 1973)

ITEM I :

ITEM II : NO CHANGES

ITEM III :

ITEM IV : Release by plane on February 19, 1973 of 81 prisoners of whom 15 were in preventive detention and 66 were charged.

ITEM V : 01 GT: Cao Viet Xa, accompanying the prisoners, has left Con Son.
02 GT: Nguyen Van Tre and Vo Van Chinh have just been transferred here. Total supervisory and reeducation personnel: 102 including those who are reinstated or on special missions. Two are at large, one on special mission, 12 on leave or on mission and 87 present.

ITEM VI : A) Men sentenced: 5622
B) Men suspected: 74
C) Men in preventive detention: 3096
D) Women sentenced: 339
E) Women suspected: 99
F) Women in preventive detention: 820

Con Son, February 20, 1973

By the Director of Con Son Reeducation Center
Aide to the Director

(Signature and seal)
THAI VAN THUONG

Translation of a confidential telegram from the Con Son prison administration, obtained from clandestine sources by the Committee to Reform the Prison System of South Vietnam. The figures under Item VI add up to a total of 10,050 prisoners in Con Son of whom 4,089 have not even been sentenced but are simply "suspects" or are being held in "preventive detention."
inmates have found death, and where we, the survivors, have been crippled. We have all con-
tracted serious illnesses - of the heart, of the liver, of the stomach, and tuberculosis. On
top of this, we are kept in tiger cages and ox pens, and have not been spared ill treatment.

On the night of February 16, 1973, we were taken from the new tiger cages, Camp 7 at Con Son
and placed under the jurisdiction of the police in Military Region III (Bien Hoa province).
The authorities discreetly left us in groups of three and five in the provinces of Bien Hoa,
Phuoc Tuy, Long An and Hau Nghia.

Under normal circumstances, the authorities should provide us with the means to return home.
Yet we were strictly forbidden to return to our native homes, especially those of us who were
from Saigon, Cholon or Gia Dinh. Today, in spite of our "liberation," we have absolutely no
guarantees [that we will remain free - ed.]. On the contrary, our lives are constantly threat­
ened by the Draconian measures instituted by the Saigon regime in the name of "security."

After 17 and 18 years of separation, our only wish is to find our families. Yet we are being
forced to drag our crippled bodies across areas we have been exiled to. Peace, independence
and liberty are our dearest hopes. Thus we were filled with joy at the announcement of the
restoration of peace in our country. We rejoiced in the Agreement on Ending the War, signed
in Paris on January 27, 1973, especially in the clauses concerning the implementation of
peace, a coalition government, neutrality and national concord in South Vietnam. We support
the presence of the International Commission of Control and Supervision in Vietnam and Indo­
china. We are ready to forget all the unhappiness that we have suffered in the past. We
bring our total support to every person and organization committed to maintaining peace on
the basis of the Paris Agreements. For these reasons, and in view of the unbelievable atti­
dute of the Saigon authorities toward the hundreds of thousands of prisoners still held today
in South Vietnamese prisons, we are sending this letter in the hope of drawing your attention
to our just and urgent demands:

1. That the I.C.C.S. and J.M.C. offices in the provinces mentioned open an inquiry and inter­
cede with the Saigon authorities to allow us to return to our families, to provide us with the
means to look after ourselves in our disability, and to guarantee our lives.

2. That they intercede with the Saigon authorities so that the latter will end all harsh
practices, and begin immediately to improve the living conditions of the prisoners. With all
due speed, the prisoners should receive adequate provisions, both in quality and quantity,
and they should be released in accordance with the spirit of the Paris Agreements.

3. That we be allowed to meet, at a prearranged place in Bien Hoa province, members of the
I.C.C.S. and the J.M.C., so that we can testify to what we have seen with our own eyes, and
have ourselves lived through.

Finally, we hope that in the name of the I.C.C.S. and the J.M.C., and in the spirit of peace,
independence and liberty for the Vietnamese people, you will act immediately and without delay
to realize these aspirations.

Signed,

The 124 disabled prisoners from Con Son,
transferred to Bien Hoa on February 16, 1973

c. Tan Hiep

To Reverend Father Chan Tin and
to religious and political organizations in
South Vietnam

We, men and women jailed in Tan Hiep prison, protest against the flagrant violations of the
Agreements signed in Paris on January 27, 1973 in a spirit of national reconciliation and
concord, with a view to ending hatred and enmity, in order to ease suffering and to reunite families. The government of Nguyen Van Thieu continually undermines the spirit and letter of the Peace Agreements.

Our status as captured and detained civilian personnel has been provided for in Chapter III, Article 8b of the Agreements and in the Protocol concerning the return of captured military personnel and foreign civilians and captured and detained Vietnamese civilian personnel. We are making public the following accusations so that the organizations concerned may compel the prison administration to cease its activities against the prisoners.

1. Article 13 of the Protocol [on prisoners - ed.] requires that within five days of the signing of the Agreements, the text must be published and made known to prisoners held by each of the parties. Nothing of the sort was done in our prison.

2. The authorities violate the spirit of Article 8c of the Agreements by continuing to spread false information in order to create dissension among the prisoners.

3. Unreasonable regulations, the imposition of a system of undemocratic representation, and in particular the use of some prisoners to subjugate others, are inhuman and in violation of international law.

4. Prisoners who oppose such measures and elect their own delegates are severely punished by police forces who are called in to reinforce the control of the prison administration.

5. The director of the prison violated Article 8b of the Protocol [on prisoners - ed.] by publicly threatening to liquidate prisoners on January 28, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, eight hours after the Agreements came into effect.

6. Article 8b was again violated on February 18, 1973 when 25 young prisoners were forcibly drafted into the army and other prisoners were obliged to obey certain inhuman regulations under threat of torture.

7. The administration is now carrying out an especially vicious policy. Men and women prisoners are told that they will be freed when they fill out an application to defect to the government side. Instead, they are reclassified as common criminals. About 200 prisoners were recently transferred to Chi Hoa Prison after they had been relabeled as common criminals.

8. The prison conditions are unimaginable, especially in terms of sanitation. A cell the size of 100 square meters holds over 200 prisoners. The food, of the kind given to pigs, is insufficient, and prisoners are forced to drink water which has already been used for washing. The prison, holding almost 20,000 people, has one small dispensary although medicine is in short supply and at times nonexistent. The result is that diseases are rife, especially fevers and epilepsy. All this is in violation of Article 8b of the Protocol [on prisoners - ed.].

9. The limitations placed on correspondence and its censorship is another violation of Article 8b of the Protocol [on prisoners - ed.].

10. Before the Agreements came into effect, the prison administration hastily set up a court to "normalize" the cases of prisoners who had never been tried. Many had been imprisoned for 4 or 5 years, doing 7 to 10 year prison terms for charges such as "illegal association." These prisoners are now reclassified as common criminals. [These measures were taken to strengthen the Saigon government's claim that there are no political prisoners. - ed.]

We, prisoners at Tan Hiep, ask the religious and political organizations in South Vietnam to publicize these facts and to inform the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Commission of Control and Supervision so that they will intercede in time to save all the prisoners here.

Our living conditions and even our lives are in danger during this period of imprisonment.

We send our best wishes to you, Reverend Father, and to all responsible religious and political organizations.

February 19, 1973
Saigon, March 20, 1973

To the International Commission for Control and Supervision
To the Joint Military Commission

SUBJECT: Appeal from the relatives of South Vietnamese prisoners to the I.C.C.S. and the J.M.C. to intercede with the Saigon government for the release of these prisoners.

Dear Sirs:

In the past two weeks, the Committee to Reform the Prison System of South Vietnam has been receiving a number of letters from various people addressed to the International Commission of Control and Supervision, the Joint Military Commission and the International Red Cross.

These people are asking for the Commissions involved to intercede with the Saigon government for the release of their relatives, who are prisoners, in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam.

The prisoners come from all walks of life. They were all arrested for their activities to end the war and restore peace and independence to our country. Some of them have been charged with "suspicion of Communist activities." Most are so badly treated in the prisons that they are seriously ill or are victims of crippling diseases.

Now that peace is to be restored, we hope to see the prisoners return home in the near future so that they can be cared for and enjoy a peaceful life with their families.

We are enclosing a list of names of people who have sent us their appeal along with their letters. If we receive more letters in forthcoming days, we shall forward them to you.

We are hoping for your active and effective help. Meanwhile, please accept our deepest gratitude and best wishes.

Yours truly,

Father Chan Tin

On behalf of the Committee to Reform the Prison System of South Vietnam

[The names of 54 prisoners are attached to Father Chan Tin's letter, along with the names of the members of their families demanding their release and the date of each demand. - ed.]
PART VI
A Visit with the Families

The writer Vu Hanh, arrested in 1967, and two of his children, Nguyen Anh Tuan, arrested in 1968, and Nguyen Thi Phuong Thao, arrested in 1973. (See p. 48)

EDITOR'S NOTE: Judith Radiguet, a scholar, lived in Cambodia and Vietnam for eight years. She went to Saigon in November 1972 to collect final notes on a study of women in Vietnam. While interviewing Vietnamese women, she met mothers and sisters of men and women held as political prisoners in Saigon's jails. The following notes are taken from her interviews with them.

LUU NGOC TRAN

His mother is here. She is 52 years old. When her son was arrested she had not known that he was active in the student movement. Up until then she had never taken any position, but now she is very proud of her son. She told me that Tran's only crime was to have loved his country and to hope for peace.

Her husband has been arrested and jailed for seven months for not having denounced his son.

At the time of his arrest Luu Ngoc Tran was a pharmaceutical student in his last year. He was arrested at his home in the middle of the night, on May 7, 1968, and brought in chains to the Le Van Duyet center where he was subjected to torture. Making him lie down, they forced soapy water into his nose and mouth, and then they connected electrical wires to him, so that his tongue was caught between his teeth and he risked being suffocated.

After one week he was transferred to the National Police Center and placed in a dungeon two and a half meters long and one meter wide, in which there were ten inmates. They lived in darkness, without being able to stretch. After two weeks he was transferred into a room in which there were a hundred inmates who had to sleep in turns. They left him there for three months. Then he was transferred again to the central prison of Chi Hoa. He was brought before the Court in September, 1968, where he was given two years imprisonment with the sentence suspended. His family came to reclaim him and were told that Le would be released. Two or three days later he was transferred to Tan Hiep prison, and on October 17, 1970 he was exiled to Con Son.

There he is kept in a tiger cage. At present his family can send him food and medicine but the guards take away most of it. As for money they say that it will be given to him when he gets out of prison. They have never allowed his mother to come and see him. Requests sent to the Ministry of the Interior have been turned down.

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A few days before Tet [the Vietnamese New Year] his mother received a letter from him. He is at the end of his strength.

There are "stool pigeons" scattered around so that if the political prisoners make any complaint, common law criminals are brought in to beat them.

NGUYEN THI YEN

Nguyen Thi Yen's younger brother, 24 years old, came here this evening to tell me the story of his sister. He is a student and she was preparing her doctoral thesis in Sino-Vietnamese classical literature.

There are seven brothers and sisters in the family. Nguyen Thi Yen, 28 years old, is the Treasurer of the General Association of Students in Saigon and was very active in the demonstrations of 1970.

They arrested her one day in April 1972 at her home in Vinh Long, her native province. They brought her immediately to central police headquarters where they kept her until January 23, 1973, when she was transferred to Thu Duc prison.

During this long period of imprisonment there was a succession of tortures: they clubbed all her joints, her back, her feet and her head. The torturers burned the tips of her breasts and her genitals with cigarettes.

During her detention, her whereabouts was kept secret. Since her arrival at Thu Duc prison her family has been able to see her and to send her packages. She is now in a narrow dungeon with three inmates. She has lost ten kilos [22 pounds], continually has headaches and can only walk with great difficulty because of having her knees clubbed.

Like so many others, she has not been brought before any court. If the press tries to talk about it, the article gets censored and the reporter gets thrown in jail.

Moreover, her family is kept under surveillance and has already been subjected to several house searches.

MRS. NGUYEN THI BINH  b. 1925
NGUYEN THI THAO. b. 1950
NGUYEN THI THANH, b. 1953

A small room with white walls reflecting the sunlight; a handsome but sad-faced woman is speaking. The mother of Thanh and Thao is telling me the story of her two daughters' arrest, their tortures, their exile.

From time to time she interrupts herself, her face hardens and she resumes her recital in a monotone. Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh has been out of prison for three days, pardoned on the occasion of the Tet festivals. She is neither poor, nor a communist. She simply has two daughters, Nguyen Thi Thanh and Nguyen Thi Thao, who were exiled to Con Son prison.

The story began in 1966. Nguyen Van Thieu and Nguyen Cao Ky were then attacking the Buddhist forces. As a sign of protest, Thanh, 13 years old at that time, went to a pagoda, and isolated herself in her prayers and thoughts. Two nuns arrived just as she was about to immolate herself.

Despite the attempts of policemen to arrest her in the pagoda, she was protected by the nuns
who brought her home. Two hours had hardly passed when the police burst into their house and demanded to see Thanh. The mother replied that she was sick. They returned a little later with a summons for both mother and daughter. The mother went alone to police headquarters. There, she was interrogated. She asked for a week's respite before the interrogation of her daughter, who was too weak, she said.

Her request was accepted. However, four policemen returned that evening to their house to draw up a first-hand report. The policemen asked Thanh why she had wanted to burn herself. She told them that it was to protest against the government which was succeeding in dividing the Buddhists by taking sides with one faction (Viet Nam Quoc Tu) in order to repress the Unified Buddhist Church.

After this incident she was kept under surveillance and continuously followed for three months.

In November 1968 Thanh, who was then 15 years old, and Thao, 18 years old, both students at the Marie Curie High School in Saigon, were arrested for having distributed leaflets advocating peace. They were taken to the police station in the Fifth District and held there for four months. They were subjected to torture: liters of soapy water were forced through their noses and mouths and then a policeman jumped on their swollen stomachs; electric shocks were applied to their ears and mouths; clubbings were administered to their shoulders, knees and joints.

Mrs. Binh stops talking, wipes her eyes, and tightens her grip on her crumpled handkerchief. She looks at me and resumes her story in a more severe tone, as if to give herself a little more courage.

In March 1969 Thanh and Thao were transferred to the women's prison of Thu Duc and again tortured. In June 1969 the military court gave Tan a one year suspended sentence, and sentenced Tao to two years' imprisonment. Thanh had refused to sign the "confessions" despite the torture and Thao willingly accepts responsibility for having drawn her younger sister into such activity [leafletting].

Their mother, who was able to visit them only on rare occasions, protested to the government. She was arrested on December 9, 1969 for having written "Communist-inspired" letters and she was tortured at the National Police [Headquarters]. They hung her by the feet, swung her back and forth and clubbed her. The torture lasted for three months. Without any trial she was sent to Thu Duc but her daughters were no longer there because they had been transferred on November 27 to the prison island of Con Son. 80th of them have their feet paralyzed and Thanh suffered hysterical fits.

The family slipped 400,000 piasters into the pockets of a member of the Security Committee - which was authorized to arrest anybody anywhere under any pretext - and Mrs. Binh was released in August 1970.

In October the two girls were transferred to Tan Hiep prison (Bien Hoa province). In April 1972 Thanh, whose condition had deteriorated, was committed to the psychiatric hospital in Bien Hoa. But on June 2 both sisters were again exiled to the tiger cages in Con Son.

In a scribbled letter, Thanh told how she wanted to laugh and to sing even though she wasn't feeling at all gay. She did not complain of the beatings and tortures but reviled the director of the prison who "insulted her as a woman" and the policemen who pushed her into a cell, and exclaimed while beating her, "this is what we do to a dirty female communist." She told me that it was at that moment that she decided to steel herself entirely, to resist right to the end, and to struggle, always, and always to struggle.

Meanwhile Mrs. Binh became treasurer of the Committee to Reform the Prison System and was arrested again on May 24, 1972. She was sent to Thu Duc and released again on February 8, 1973.

Finally she becomes silent and looks at me. I ask her: aren't you afraid of reprisals if all this is published?

She laughs for the first time and her drawn face suddenly changes: "Of course I am a little afraid, but it's absolutely necessary to speak if there is to be justice, and peace, real peace."
LAWYER NGUYEN LONG

Mrs. Long arrives, a fragile woman dressed in a gray tunic. As she tells her story, her expression becomes more and more animated.

Her husband, the lawyer Nguyen Long, is well known in Vietnam. In October 1964 he founded the Movement for Self-Determination in South Vietnam. In February 1965 he launched an appeal for peace which resulted in his arrest on February 24, 1965. They detained him in the National Police Headquarters for two months. Then he was transferred to the central prison of Chi Hoa for four months.

On July 9, 1965 the Military Court for Military Region III sentenced him to ten years at hard labor and five years of exile.

He remained in Chi Hoa for two years, where he became critically ill. His family asked that he be committed to a hospital. He had become infected with zona and nearly lost an eye. The authorities refused.

Mrs. Long made successive requests to have his imprisonment suspended so that he could be cared for. With the help of Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists of which he was a member, Long was released on October 6, 1967 by a special decree of the Nguyen Cao Ky Administration under the condition that the whole family, Mrs. Long and their three daughters, must guarantee with their lives and property that he would not escape.

After being nursed back to health he resumed his professional and militant activities. He worked for peace, joined the Committee to Reform the Prison System and continued his activities in the Movement for Self-Determination. He donated his services to defend militant causes, especially that of the students during their mass trial in April 1970. He also served as Mrs. Ngo Ba Thanh's lawyer. He became more and more of a thorn in the side of the Thieu administration and on June 29, 1977, at 7 p.m., as he was leaving his office, policemen in a jeep arrested him and took him to the police prefecture and then to the National Police Headquarters.

There, they did him the favor of showing him the Prime Minister's new decree which cancelled outright the October 6, 1967 decree which had freed him.

Mrs. Long becomes animated as she recalls the history of these decrees, which are only a mask for the bad faith and arbitrary decisions of the government. Long is again imprisoned and isolated as the only political prisoner among some fifty common criminals. His daughter went to see him several days ago. His state of health has worsened. Mrs. Long actively carries on her husband's work with the support of their children. The whole family accepts their sufferings and only wants peace.

HUYNH TAN MAM

She's a very old woman with a wrinkled face and small lively eyes that are moist. I have a hard time hiding my surprise when she tells me that she is 67 years old.

No doubt the poverty, the suffering, living in fear and anxiety for the future have made their mark on this woman. She has five children. Her dead face suddenly becomes animated and her long wrinkled hands accentuate her words.

Her son is Huynh Tan Mam, the President of the National Student Association of Vietnam. He was arrested several times during the past years and has again been in jail since January 5, 1972.

He was arrested at the beginning of 1970 and tortured until he was almost dead. On March 30, 1970 a Catholic nun from Cho Quan hospital revealed to a priest that the students had been
hospitalized and tortured to the point of death. On March 31, eight Catholic priests issued a statement on the torture of students, on corruption and on human rights. This statement received some coverage in the Vietnamese and overseas press. The Vietnamese Senate commissioned a group of senators who, in their investigative report, confirmed the existence of tortures. Under this political pressure, the government organized a mass trial in which 21 students were to be brought before the Saigon Special Military Court. Seventeen of these students were brought before the public in stretchers; the other four could not be moved.

The sight of these 17 students who had been visibly tortured caused a momentary stupor and powerful feeling of indignation.

The three defense lawyers (Nguyen Long was among them) based their case on two points:

1 - The Special Military Court was established in 1965 for a two year term. By 1970 the jurisdiction of this court had expired. Decree number 11/62 setting up this military court had thus become unconstitutional.

2 - Decree number 12/56 of the Ministry of National Defense which brought the student Huynh Tan Mam before the special court was illegal.

The Special Military Court disagreed with these two points but ten of the students were released on probation, among them Mam and Cao Thi Que Huong. On April 24, 1970 the Supreme Court of Appeal did not resolve the question of the constitutionality of the Special Military Court but recognized the existence of the tortures and declared invalid the confessions extracted as a result of these tortures.

Despite this 11 students remained in prison. Those who were on probation soon after the trial were received and nursed back to health by students from the Saigon School of Agriculture. To this day the other 11 students are still detained and the ten others who had been given provisional freedom were all arrested again a few months later.

Mam, who resumed his duties as President of the National Student Association, was again arrested on January 5, 1972 during a demonstration. He had been accompanied by another student who came immediately to announce the news. On the following day, the account of Mam's arrest was published in all the newspapers. His mother and his lawyer went to the police and demanded to know where Mam was. The police denied that Mam had been arrested. A month later they went to his house and asked his mother to post an announcement for a missing person.

When his mother replied that she knew Mam was at the Fifth District Police Station, the policeman told her simply that he was carrying out orders "from above."

Cruelly tortured and injected with truth serum to extract his confession about connections with the "Viet Cong," Mam remained steadfast. Nearly blinded by a 1,000 watt bulb and crippled in one leg, he is today between life and death.

After refusing to commit him to a hospital, the authorities transferred him to the U.S.-South Vietnamese Central Intelligence Office to subject him to more sophisticated tortures.

Mam's mother stops talking and I am overwhelmed again both by her story and by the force and dignity she has shown in telling me, simply, in an almost detached way, these horrible events and her son's ordeal.

Wishing to know more about her, I ask her how she makes her living. Each of her daughters, despite their heavy responsibilities - children to feed, husbands in the army - supports her a little. She lives with one of them and she and her daughter sell vegetables in the Saigon market.

Mam's mother is a simple woman who had no political consciousness. Now she goes to meetings of the Committee to Reform the Prison System. It is her way of struggling for the freedom of her son and of all the others.
Saïgon, le 12 Février 1973

Les Étudiants et Collègues emprisonnés ou Centre de Rédééducation de Saïgon (Maison de prison de Chù Hoà)

A : Monsieur Moullen
Président de la Croix-Rouge Internationale
2000 Béatitude, Saïgon

Objet : état actuel des Étudiants et Collègues arrêtés et pris en
prison par le gouvernement de Saïgon durant les années

Cher Monsieur,

Nous sommes les Étudiants, les Étudiants de Saïgon et Collègues,
jusqu'à présent emprisonnés en raison politique par le gouvernement de Saïgon au "Centre de Rédééducation" de Saïgon, désirant au nom de
salle 10 de cette prison, très humble de recevoir l'information de votre
présence à Saïgon comme président de la Commission de la Croix

Conformément à l'ordre du jour, nous avons fermé la journée d'hier sans être entendu par cette Commission qui a reçu des représentants de prisonniers et de prisonniers des années précédentes.

Puis nous avons reçu votre intervention auprès du gouvernement de Saïgon afin d'obtenir un nouveau contrôle des informations internes par l'Etat d'Empire.

Nous sommes, cher Monsieur, la salutation très distinguée et
les meilleurs vœux des Étudiants et Collègues viêt-naméens.

Pour les Étudiants et Collègues emprisonnés
au Centre de Rédééducation de Saïgon (Chù Hoà)

Moullen

Chù Hoà, le 12 Février
("Président de l'Association Générale
et Etudiants de Saïgon")

Opening and end of a letter from former national student president Huynh Tan Nam (see p. 45) to M. Moullen of the International Red Cross, smuggled out of Chi Hoa Prison February 1973. M. Moullen was in Saigon as president of a committee dealing with prisoner exchanges. The letter tells M. Moullen that many students are being held in South Vietnamese prisons and asks his committee to visit them in prison and intervene for their release.
Her throat swollen with emotion and her fists tightened, this woman with a round, immobile face prepares to tell me her story.

Her husband, Nguyen Van Dung, is a writer; his pen name is Vu Hanh. He is 48 years old and they have seven children.

He was arrested in 1967. He was accused of writing articles critical of the government, of living close to the people, and hence, of being a communist. In fact, he had written an article denouncing another journalist, Chu Tu, as being a member of the police.

He was kept at police headquarters. During this time he was tortured, but less brutally than others: his fame helped him.

He was transferred to Tan Hiep prison and released after three years of detention due to the intercession of the International Pen Club and a priest, Thanh Long, who is a professor of the Faculty of Letters in Saigon.

On July 2, 1968, his son Nguyen Anh Tuan was arrested at his home while his father was still in prison. In January 1969 the son was brought before the Saigon military court and sentenced to 20 years' hard labor for activities directed against the state: he had protested the arbitrary imprisonment of his father and demonstrated for peace. Tuan was transferred to Con Son Prison Island on March 31, 1969; he was then 18 years old and studying for the second section of his baccalaureate college entrance examinations.

Tortured and beaten almost to death before and after his trial, Tuan suffered successive hemorrhages in the stomach. Because he refused to salute the flag, which is considered a grave affront, he was labelled a "recalcitrant" and thus was especially mistreated to the point where he became paralyzed for several weeks after sessions in which he was clubbed in the joints.

He was cared for and partially healed by a companion, a student in his last year of medical school. This student, who was arrested at the completion of his studies, was released several months ago. During his detention he cared for his fellow inmates and studied all kinds of illnesses. His doctoral thesis on the theme of "special illnesses caused by imprisonment" cannot be published.

-- While I'm taking down notes I can feel her intense look, but I keep on writing and avoid raising my eyes.

Then she tells me that she was only able to see her son four years later, in November 1972, due to the efforts of a friend who knew the prison director. She received permission to see him only on the condition that she convince him to observe the prison rules.

She has only had two letters from him: one in October 1972, the other in January 1973.

The news from Con Son about his present state of health is alarming.

-- I think that she has finished, but she keeps on talking. It is about her fifth daughter, Nguyen Thi Phuong Thao, who is 14 years old.

Two days before the cease-fire, January 25, 1973, a group of armed policemen took her at 3 o'clock in the morning to police headquarters. Since then her family has not received any news. They are not allowed to see her or even to send packages.

Thao was part of the young Buddhists' social movement. During a raid the policemen found four songs that she had composed in favor of peace. She has been accused of inciting her comrades to sing them.
The nuns in saffron robes bustle about and I look at them, surprised. I've been living here for several days and have become accustomed to the calm of the pagoda. As the truck engine is starting I approach one of the nuns who has interpreted and helped me communicate with everyone else here since the beginning of my stay.

"What's going on? Are you leaving?"--She answers me a little brusquely, "Yes. But wait, we'll be back in the evening." Then, "we're going to pray for one of the dead in the prisons." I look at her, dumbfounded, and suddenly I realize that they too are concerned about the prisoners.

On January 6, 1973, Nguyen Ngoc Phuong died, age 34. A real leader of the third force. Despite his young age, he had been a veteran resister. In 1950 he joined the Resistance in the war against the French.

In 1960, he was arrested and sentenced to three years' imprisonment, though in fact he did four years, after which he was released. He was in very weak health, at the second stage of tuberculosis; his eyesight was deteriorating, and he walked on crutches.

Thereafter he participated in the student movement for peace, self-determination and university autonomy, and opposed the student draft.

On March 5, 1970 both he and his wife were arrested. At police headquarters they were tortured in front of one another. The authorities wanted to make them confess that they had ties with the communists. His wife, Cao Thi Que Huong, was given provisional freedom after the mass trial of the students on April 20, 1970. The Supreme Court of Appeal had confirmed the existence of tortures and had declared that confessions extracted from torture were nullified and invalid.

At the end of December, 1972, Phuong and 42 other students began a hunger strike in protest against the ill-treatment [of prisoners]. Colonel Nguyen Van Ve, Director of [Chi Hoa] prison and former Director of Con Son, broke up the student group and ordered their hands and feet chained and told their guards, who were common law prisoners, to beat them savagely.

After a hunger strike of 11 days and with the intercession of the Committee to Reform the Prison System of South Vietnam, these actions were stopped.

On January 5, 1973, the Director of the prison gave orders to have Phuong taken to a hospital in the capital. As administrative procedures were very complicated, most of the hospitals in Saigon refused to admit him. Finally he was admitted to Do Thanh hospital. He arrived, accompanied by two guards, and died shortly afterwards. He had just been tortured and had been given a mysterious injection.

A letter dated January 6, 1973 from 20 high school and university students imprisoned in Chi Hoa addressed to religious leaders, senators, congressmen, professors, intellectuals, trade unions, movements struggling for peace and self-determination, mothers and all Vietnamese, reached the nuns. It announced the death of Nguyen Ngoc Phuong.

Phuong, one of his friends told me, was a liberal person, capable, a man who dreamed of peace, a peace which would give him freedom, a family life with his wife, and the building of a new society.

Today Phuong is dead and his wife, Cao Thi Que Huong, was arrested on January 25, 1973. No one has any news of her.