Richard Verrone: This is Richard Verrone and I’m continuing my interview with
Ambassador Phong. Today is January 24, 2003. Sir, right now in Paris they’re having a
meeting, a conference marking the fortieth anniversary of the signing of the Paris Peace
Agreements and unfortunately you were not invited to this meeting but I’d like to give
you a chance to talk about it now if you’d like and what are your feelings and what’s
happening there? Why do they have this, obviously they’re having this commemoration
to mark forty years, but what do you think the purpose of the meeting really is?

Nguyen Xuan Phong: Well, it’s amazing to begin with that you can mark that
thirty years anniversary of the Saigon Paris Agreement this year.

RV: The thirtieth, right, not the fortieth.

NX: 2003 and it was signed on the 27th of January of the year 1973 and as you
know it was signed by for foreign ministers of the four delegations, that is Secretary
William Rogers of the United States, Mr. Moon Di Drin, for Hanoi government, Madame
Binh for the PRG, that is to say the NLF, the Vietcong its commonly referred and my Mr.
Dong Van Lamm who was at that time the foreign minister of the Saigon government.
Well, what they call the Collect International, which is organized in Paris and the first
meeting is just for today, the 24th of January and it will continue also tomorrow on the
25th Saturday, at the very place where the signing of the Paris Agreement took place
thirty years ago, that was the old Hotel Majestic, a very nice place, enormous place which
then was given to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the French government to become
the international center for conference and that was where the Paris Talks took place,
from January 1969 to January 1973 in the Paris Agreement, supposedly to end the war
and restore peace in Vietnam took place. I was expecting to attend the meeting today but
they wouldn’t list me on the official speakers and accept for me to be present and ask for
the floor, so I said I wouldn’t ask for the floor. But in fact we have Personality Bowman
participating and also our Ambassador Mu Din participating there, probably they may
consider those two people more moderate than me.

RV: Do you think that’s why that you were not given an official listing on the
program?

NXP: Probably, probably. And since I was the one who really had the continuity
from the very beginning in 1968 even at the time of Ambassador Harriman and
Ambassador Cyrus Vance then also Madame Binh who was there right at the beginning
until the end, that is in 1973, I even continued after 1973 of course according to the
provisions of the Paris Agreement, the two South Vietnamese parties also had the
continuation of the Paris Talks which became the conference of La Sah Saint Clue and I
was there also with the Conference of La Sah Saint Clue, which was headed by Mr. Nguyen Van Thieu for the PRG in the beginning. So the present Collect International,
which is taking place now right in Paris, I think it is organized the by the group of
professors from the French Universities, academics and it is very clear that they are all,
shall we say leftists and the subject for the Collect is supposed to be the American
intervention in the Vietnam War and the positions of the European governments to that
American in Vietnam and so we can expect what they will say. Anyway, I have
responded to Professor Christopher Gosher who’s also on the magazine committee of the
Collect. The only point of interest come to my mind for such a Collect would be to
understand better the position taken by the French government in the ‘60s, 1960s
concerning the Vietnam War because by 1965 General DeGaulle while visiting Phnom
Penh made a very famous declaration claiming that the whole Indochinese peninsula, that
is Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam should be a zone of neutrality so we tired to understand
that when we arrived in Paris, 1968 and then right afterwards had the opening of the Paris
Talks in 1969, January 1969 we try very hard to understand that notion of neutrality by
General DeGaulle and it seems to use that even the French foreign ministry was not very
clear how to understand that notion of neutrality proposed by General DeGaulle in that
time. At these Collect International there will be also Ambassador Fromon Maruice, he
was the director of the Asia Pacific desk of the French foreign ministry during the time of
the Paris Talks. Eventually he became the French ambassador to Moscow. I also was
able to see Ambassador Fromon Maurice later after the night was solidified. He is very
bitter of that whole history but he was not able to explain that notion of neutrality with
also Mr. Marie Bold who was directly responsible for the Vietnam issue at the French
foreign ministry and eventually I also had a meeting, a discussion with Mr. Michal
DuBray who was the French foreign minister at that time, and the man, he’s a very hard
man. Mr. DuBray is well known to be very forceful personality and of course he was
completely against eh American personality but he was not even able to explain that
notion of neutrality and in the end we had a very heated discussion and he came to the
only explanation of possible of General DeGaulle’s notion of neutrality. He claimed that
North Vietnam and South Vietnam, that is the Saigon government and the Hanoi
government could take a neutral attitude and claim neutrality in their action because I
said that it would be very difficult for both North Vietnam and South Vietnam to be
neutral since they had military alliances in the armed conflict going on at that time. But
he said that you can have your own different political systems and still remain neutral, I
said that, I used a French expression in that discussion I said, “It seems to be splitting hair
in four,” that’s how the French called it. But that was it, France with her past in
Indochina has always wanted to return to Indochina and assume a role there once the
American influence is removed, even right now, but France is no longer really military or
economic power with the capability to put its weight in trying to resolve the Vietnam
War. The basic issue of course when talking to French, because they try to find a
formula by which they could I suppose neutralize the various forces playing there
because Indochina fell into the gray area of the Yalta Conference, that is to day, not a
clear cut of either side and that was the reason why you had disputes in those gray areas.
And either you cut up that Indochinese peninsula and divide it to the powers which have
any kind of bearing or influence, mainly the Soviet Union, the PRC and the United
States, so by the geographical or physical decision of that Indochinese peninsula you can have some kind of stalemate, neutralization.

RV: But how long would that last?

NXP: As long as those powers were able to exercise their influence and their weight and if you miss a step there the other guy would take over. You have also what we call the Balkanization process, that is to say you have the influences of those powers played together in a certain area and of course at the same time you come to a kind of stalemate too but by accepting a positive intervention instead of a negative attitude, not to intervene and that was also I think the choice that Prince Yanuk faced at that time with the American and particularly the Soviet Union influence in Cambodia because the Chinese were not yet very much in position to play the game in face of the Soviets and the Americans. So, there we also had the same choice in order to propose in the new associations whether we can have that kind of neutral attitude and neutral position and neutrality there we understood at that time could be as I just said whether it would be a negative neutrality or a positive neutrality and at that time we used a special whether you have your hands open up or you have your hands down, that is you don’t receive anything from anybody, that is the negative way to deny the influence of anybody, it was at that time a bit the position of the Burmese and then in the country there was nothing at all, not even two space for you to use. Or you have like Sanup, Prince Yanuk then you open your hands up and you receive aid from everybody, that would be more beneficial to the people, that is to say either you have first class hospital in Phnom Penh, built by the Russians and then you have the highways and the Com Pen Chen harbor by the Americans, then you receive aid from everybody, so that was also a choice for the Vietnamese, both North and South Vietnams to consider whether we could do that.

RV: And you’re talking about 1945 right, right after World War Two?

NXP: Even in the ‘60s.

RV: And all the way up into the ’60s?

NXP: Yes, and that was the basic choice to President Diem, in the early ‘60s with President Kennedy because the Diemists continued to claim even up to today that the poor man did not want to internationalize the conflict and resisted very hard the American intervention in Vietnam and at the same time claimed that he was trying to
open up channels with Ho Chi Minh and find a peaceful solution to the thing. They were
very laudable motives on the part of President Ngo Dinh Diem but the initiative was not
in his hand, I mean the escalation of the war was not in his hand and the point of dispute
now is to determine whether the U.S. escalated the war or it was the Soviets which
through Hanoi escalated the war in that internationalized confrontation, armed conflict in
Vietnam. President Diem wouldn’t be in position to decide or influence on that kind of a
choice and second, the Diemists claim that he tried to find a solution between brother
enemies, well it is a very honorable thing to do but I doubt very much that Ho Chi Minh
and Vietnamese Communist Party would go into any compromise with President Diem.

RV: For neutrality both parties have to honor neutrality and Ho Chi Minh’s side
simply had a purpose of goal not to.

NXP: The same story happened again with General Nguyen Can when he ousted
General Big Minh and two other and by the beginning of 1965 he continued in the same
line claiming that he wanted to defuse the armed conflict in Vietnam and had already
contacts with the NLF at that time with Mr. Nguyen Huu Tho and Madame Binh in order
to compromise with the Vietcong and that would be even a worse situation because by
the early 1960s President Diem had the opportunity to compromise shall we say inverted
Communist with Ho Chi Minh, but then with General Can in 1965, beginning of 1965 it
was an even worse compromise with the Vietcong, not even with Hanoi, so you keep on
chopping up the country in small pieces instead of bringing it together, so that was the, I
think the basic options open to those brother enemies but I must say that I have never
been attracted or convinced by any possibility of compromise with the Communist
Vietnamese.

RV: So what would you say now, today if you were in Paris and you wanted to
discuss the French position with regards to the conflict in Vietnam? Would the French
now admit, yes we wanted as much influence in Vietnam as possible, especially after the
Americans left, that’s according to our conversation previous, that’s why Big Minh was
put in place or was, they were ready to take the reins, that’s why the French wanted him
there because they knew that he could be controlled or be influenced somewhat by the
French and they would have more of a say in the future of Vietnam and their old colony?
Would France today go with that, would the scholars at this conference debate that point or is that something that’s widely accepted?

NXP: You and I continue to hold on the views I had a couple of years ago and I try very hard to push those views, which were not accepted by President Thieu but he was open to listen to those views. I recognize the French could play a role in finding solutions to the Vietnam War in 1969, 1970, that was really for me at that time the point in time to choose something, that was the moment when all the parties involved face a choice, afterwards in ’71, 1971, ’72, it was just the sequence of events coming from the decisions made in ’69, ’70 and ’71. I was agreeable to a role which would be possible for the French to play and in the end I also very bluntly said to the French that they did not have the means of their policy and they cannot, they could not do that alone and they would not do it with the Americans, so there was no other choice possible for them to go Chinese, on the international scene in order to have any weight in their position, in their say. And they came to admit that the only role that was possible for the French government to play was to be a kind of cement, to bring others together, they would not be in the position to have a solution by themselves but they can help other parties to come to a solution, so I said fair enough, considering their experience and knowledge of the area, the traditional ties they always had with the Vietnamese, the Lao and the Cambodians. So I took the position of completely opposite of Hanoi, Saigon and even the Americans, that is to say trying to divide, keep on dividing since the 1954 Geneva Agreement dividing the country in two and now it was amazing to me that Dr. Kissinger could go and do such a contradiction because the U.S. refused to recognize the Geneva Accords in 1954, that was a time of Mr. Foster Dulles, did not recognize at all President Eisenhower did not recognize the Geneva Accords, that is to say you have never accepted the notion which was a good position that Vietnam, in Vietnam you have two Vietnams and two peoples, north and south and in fact Ho Chi Minh never claimed that there were two Vietnams. Although he claimed that he was in the north and there was a demarcation line to the seventeenth parallel, that was just a line dividing the conflicting forces, temporary line of demarcation, it was not a division of the country. When President Diem in 1955 started to claim that he had a clear different country called South Vietnam, and then President Kennedy and then President Johnson went into that kind of
argumentation and even worse in 1971, '72, Dr. Kissinger even claimed that there were
two South Vietnams, not only two Vietnams, but two south Vietnams, two armies, two
administration, so you lost the thing completely.

RV: In 1954?

NXP: Yes, and that was the strategy point, militarily, politically, socially and
everything contrary.

RV: And it was wrong from the very beginning?

NXP: Very beginning and that was the point which did not go through to the
people. The people had never accepted the division at the seventeenth parallel. When
you claim nationalism, you claim sovereignty for a country called South Vietnam, that
didn’t go in the minds of the ordinary people and the peasants in the countryside. Ho Chi
Minh never claimed that, and so in Paris in 1969, 1970, I tried to convince the French and
the Chinese that instead of dividing all the time why don’t we get together and with the
help of the French to cement everybody and in order to put more weight to the whole
equation the French would have Beijing, Paris would have Beijing by its side and so that
was reason why I advanced the idea the that we widen the demarcation line and make it a
free zone for trade toe begin with, put the political notions aside from the moment and
let’s help the people there get a better life to begin with, open, anybody can come in, the
Russians, the Americans, and the Europeans and everybody and the Taklelli, the
Japanese. They would travel to there Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwanese weather and
that would also be a point of meeting for Beijing and Taiwan at the same time. But that
can be done, the could be done at that time. Then you have buffer zones on either side of
that so-called free market zone and ten eventually we have a kind of integration, osmosis
process and bring economic betterment in those things and not disputes on sovereignties
and political issues, which were not of much interest to the ordinary people anywhere.

RV: What about the fact that Ho Chi Minh’s North Vietnam had one single goal
and that was to take the whole country and make it a Communist country, they wouldn’t
honor the buffer zone?

NXP: There was no doubt in anybody’s mind that the final aim and objective of
Ho Chi Minh and the Vietnam Communist party was to have to have communist rule on
the whole of the country and they thought that they were in position to get it, the only
problem was that to convince them and I think it was the American policy as well, to show them and dissuade them that they would not have it very quick. They may have it in ten, twenty, fifty years time, but not right away, that was the way of dissuasion because in the end the American policy was just a policy of dissuasion in fact because you did not have really the initiative in that armed conflict. You got yourself into something which was an open end, because the guy was in his own country, he claimed to be in his own house and you just cam from half of the world there to have a fight with him. So, I think that the international situation also helped at that time to persuade Hanoi that it will have to wait for awhile before it could partake the whole of country by force of arms, which was a combination of what they call different warfare, conventional war with guerilla warfare, terrorism and only new notions of popular war.

RV: Do you think this buffer zone that you described in place and the United States gone and two Vietnams in the buffer zone and international trade inside this buffer zone, that the course of the country’s history would resort back to what it was in the 1950s up to 1963 with the terrorism. Would it almost go back to well, the North, with the way its, its not going to invade conventionally through this buffer zone let’s say for example, but it would infiltrate South Vietnam just as it did in the ‘50s. I think the police action necessary to maintain those buffer zones and those open house area would be feasible because it would be a small area with a very limited number of people and the administration of those zones with the cradle phasing out of the military and the action. It would be possible together, with everybody, the French, the Chinese, Beijing to have an effective police action there because it was mainly a problem of maintaining law and order.

RV: Perhaps involving the United Nations.

NXP: Yes, you see and you have already committed to make the whole thing work on a very small area the begin with as a test of your good will or not and of course you have to bring in your military umbrellas to dissuade people not to do those bad things on both sides. Even then you can retaliate and that was amazing for me, that why North Vietnam claimed that it had the right to liberate the South, we never head the South Vietnamese claiming the right to liberate the North because of the American policy, they couldn’t do that. They tried to do it with commandos and so on, but they through North
Vietnam in the late ‘50s and the beginning of the ‘60s but it stopped very quickly because it was no use for them to do in such a way with the Communist regime in North Vietnam you don’t infiltrate commandos.

RV: Were your buffer zone be kind of a small step into infiltrating the north through capitalism, letting the people see the benefits of free trade?

NXP: Well, by the end of the day that would be the end of it but I think that Ho Chi Minh was not stupid enough not to see that it would be a good thing to have more goods to use.

RV: But he’s dead and so his successors?

NXP: Even then you see, he had the idea of maintaining some autonomy for the south of Vietnam, that is when he died, 1969, there was a meeting before his death of all the South Vietnamese cadres who went north in the 1940s and among them were my own uncles and they reported and they told me after ’75 that they attended a meeting with Ho Chi Minh who gathered all those South Vietnamese who joined in the late 1940s in the north in the Vietminh ranks to fight the French at that time because they were all fighting together against the French return and Ho Chi Minh did say that they were going to liberate South Vietnam sooner or later but they must remember that the people in South Vietnam had lots of initiative and dynamic forces there for economic development and so they should maintain the kind of autonomy and let those South Vietnamese continue because he also mentioned that there were lots of accumulated assets left by the Americans in South Vietnam, factories, all kinds of machinery which later on we were able to assess in order of about twenty million U.S. dollars because Vietnam in the early 1970s were even more ahead of South Korea and Thailand economically. Even after the fall of Saigon in 1975 the Communist administration there didn’t know what to do with that machinery and factories and eventually by the end of 1970s and beginning 1980s they sold it as scraps to everybody.

RV: Do you see that as a softening of Ho Chi Minh’s position before his death in the late ‘60s?

NXP: No, Ho Chi Minh, you can say whatever you want against him but to me he was a very practical man and he was able to seize opportunities and then he was able to play with everybody. He’s not a very original guy but he was a great manipulator and he
saw the little things that you could do in order to overcome the obstacles. I think that was
the creative ability of Ho Chie Minh.

RV: So, if you’re in Paris now today thirty years later and you’re talking about
this stuff, what’s the reaction of NLF side, Madame Binh is going to be there, what’s the
reaction that you think you would get?

NXP: Well, La Ru Belham would be there, so he’s the only to more or less try to
bring out the meaning and the significance of the American intervention in Vietnam in an
objective way and probably Ambassador Budier who’s very anti-Communist, he would,
but it would it be interesting if I were there and see Madame Binh again because we have
been facing each other for years there I would ask her to explain because I’m still able to
understand the position she took with the North Vietnamese of Hanoi and what was, what
did they mean exactly by American aggression in Vietnam? I don’t think that the
American, the nation is very imperialist nations, of course. Of course they want their
ways of life to be accepted and enjoyed by other peoples in the world but I don’t think
they force people to their ways of life, it is open to them to accept their ways of life or
not, as long as they don’t bomb American embassies and things like that but I think that it
would be useful if Madame Binh now, thirty years after the Paris Agreement tried to
explain very sincerely and honestly to the American and the Vietnamese people what she
meant by American aggression.

RV: Would she be able to, would she even want to engage in that?

NXP: They are a bit reluctant to explain that now; even in Vietnam you have very
little mention of those things nowadays in Vietnam, thirty years later. I would also very
honestly say to her, I have nothing against their political ideas or ideology, the only thing
which can deal with is to improve the lot of the Vietnamese people and they claim to for
thirty years they fought the French and the Americans but they have always claimed to
have a better system, to have better goals and better aims for the Vietnamese people and
in thirty years of peace, so-called peace after the signing Paris Agreement, they failed
completely.

RV: Is that something that you would bring up and say, look, here’s your system
has been in place for thirty years now and it has failed, so something needs to change?
NXP: Yes. Well, the first thing is that the Vietnam Communist Party, even among themselves, now they have a big dispute, that is to say for the first time those Communist leaders in Hanoi were not even able to do their auto critique as Uncle HO taught them. If you did bad things be honest enough to admit and even among the members of the Communist Party now in Vietnam, they criticize their leaders for the utter failure to recognize that mistake in the last thirty years, they instead claim that they have always done their best.

RV: Why are they reluctant to do this, do you think?

NXP: Because I think that the leaders now there, are not the kind of stature, level of Ho Chi Minh.

RV: Intellectual level?

NXP: Intellectual, nothing compared to Ho Chi Minh or Chung Chen or all of those people thirty years ago. So I think what has happened to Vietnamese people after the colonial period in the 1940s, including Ho Chi Minh I would say, the Vietnamese nation has suffered from a profound crisis of leadership and it is getting worse and worse right now.

RV: What’s the answer?

NXP: Well, we have a problem in our Vietnamese culture and tradition and that the heroes and savior of the nation will come out of the grasses and so I think that it is the ying yang theory, when it goes down to the bottom, it has to go up, there’s no other way to do it, probably someone will come out but it will be a guy in his forties now I suppose.

RV: Let’s go back to 1975, you’re getting ready to “re-educated,” this is May 1975, and you knew that you would have to report for the so-called thirty days and I assume you thought you would be released after thirty days or did you have an inclination that that probably was not going to happen?

NXP: Well, it was rather difficult to have a choice there for me personally. First of all the overwhelming concern that I had at that time was for my old parents and I was determined to stay by their side, whatever may happen.

RV: Did your uncles say look, when you go away for thirty days, or when you go away, we’re part of the family, we’ll take care of your parents?
NXP: Yes, that was very clear to us after the 30th of April, ’75, they all rushed to our house and it was amazing, it was amazing because they went north in the late 1940s, they burned the old houses in our native village except for that main house of the ancestors which was handed down to the eldest son, the main branch of the family which happened to be my father and they burnt their own house and left, joined the Vietminh ranks in North Vietnam in the late 1940s.

RV: Were these your mother’s brothers or your father’s brothers?

NXP: Fathers because on my mother’s side there was not many people and they came back in Saigon and we were really happy to be reunited. We did not think anything political and there was no notion of defeat or victory, it was just the family because it was so important to us that at last after so many years, thirty years we are now openly together, openly because we were also able to see one another now and then covertly.

RV: Did you ever get to travel north so see them?

NXP: No, no it was not possible.

RV: But they were able to come south occasionally to see you.

NXP: Yes, because they operate in the south, those relatives.

RV: What were their positions in the Vietminh?

NXP: Well, the most striking guy was the seventh uncles, we called seventh uncle. He joined the Vietminh ranks in the late 1940s and by the time of the Geneva Accords in 1954 he also reached the rank of colonel in the regular army in North Vietnam. And after that he was sent to the Soviet Union for training in economics and management and returned to Hanoi to manage the state owned enterprises there. In 1975 when Saigon fell he was made a kind of party secretary for the light industry and he took over for example the mill factories and the can factories, foodstuff, which was very essential because that’s the food problem too. So, he was shall we say in the party, the Communist Party at the ministry level, he was the political commissar for the light industry. The ninth uncle, much more intellectual, he go so-called PhD together with his wife from the Soviet Union and he was in Prague, Czechoslovakia and then in Moscow and returned and became a kind of vice minister for Education and he was made the head of the municipal Vietnam chapter after the fall of Saigon, so that was for education. On the paternal side we also had the High Tung, a kind of, I would call a cousin of my father.
but I consider him as an uncle because in the Vietnamese tradition when you have the
cousins of your father, they are considered uncles. That one is a three-star general and he
was the commanding general for the Mi Sai force of North Vietnam. Eventually he went
to fight in Mongolia in the ‘80s, after ‘79 returned and each week he visited my father.
He was younger than my father and they really love each other since childhood and it was
very sad fate that three-star general, he got an operation for appendicitis on the Ton Nhut
hospital in Saigon reserved for the big shot and he died from infection at that
appendicitis, a three-star general who dies from because it was really dirty in that hospital
and so that was his fate. It is interesting also to mention that our native village on my
father’s side of Yung Tom, Ben Tri province, the whole province of Ben Tri, that is the
province of uprising for Vietnam, that is where the resistance movements started against
the French and it was called the uprising province, province of uprising. You have
fourteen generals, Hanoi Vietcong generals, fourteen and eight of them where from our
native village of Yung Tom and there was also a very well known general by the name of
General Cong who grew up with my father and he was, when he was a boy he was
responsible to take care of the buffaloes and then have the cow, they have to clean the
buffaloes after each day in the fields and he became also a three-star general and that’s
from the Yung Trom village, my father’s native village. So, almost everybody in our
extended family went Vietcong, only my father remained because he was responsible for
the ancestor’s altar and remained there and became the capitalist side in the conflict.

RV: By default, really because he had to stay and take care of the ancestors?
NXP: Yes, I think it was not much of a choice and we just continued with life like
that.

RV: Do you think he would have gone north if he had a choice, do you think he
would gone to the other side?
NXP: At that time if, as most of the youngsters were very motivated in the 1940s
after the Second World War and with the return of the French because at the beginning
you had British troops and the Indian troops, you had the Chinese troops even before the
French returned and then the French returned. I think that most of the young people at
that time were clearly motivated to fight against the return of the French colonial forces.
There was no hesitation whatsoever because we didn’t see anything else and then even
when Ho Chi Minh formed his government and made the Declaration of Independence, September 2, 1945, after that he did try, and again he’s very crafty, you must admit the guy was really skillful, he try and set up a kind of a coalition government which was really amazing because in other countries the Communist party, if they took power they would not have coalition governments with anybody but in North Vietnam Ho Chi Minh did that, but he did that to serve his purpose because he did not really believe in any kind of power sharing political coalition at all. And just a few months later, all those so-called coalition governments had collapsed completely because he started to eliminate their position so by the late 1940s every knew very well that there was no way to compromise with the Vietnam Communist party. And my uncles, through the conversation I had with them after the fall of Saigon, they were no Communists at all, they happened to be there, to be in that side and they just continue like that. Those who were in the Army continued with the military career, those who were in the industry continued to be workers or managers, like the ninth uncle, he was in education and he pursued his career in education, so that was it.

RV: In general would you say that the Vietnamese people living in the north and some of the upper echelon people living in the north were really truly communist or were they simply there because that’s where they lived, did they have a political ideology, did they really believe that they were communist? If you walked up to somebody in Thien, or outside of Hanoi and said “Are you a communist?” privately?

NXP: Very honestly, I’m sure you also share my views, by the 1940s I doubt very much that people were much aware of ideological persuasions about capitalism and communism or socialism, it was just a matter of I would say nationalism, which was also a very vague feeling and concept, the only complete and practical, the normalization of that kind of sort of nationalism would be to put and to colonial rule and the so-called feel that the you are now independent or sovereign in your country, which were also I’m sure very vague ideas to national sovereignty and national independence but that was the upsurge, a tremendous upsurge in all those former colonial countries. So, talking to those uncles, I did not have an impression that they were communists at all and they accepted the leadership of the Vietnam communist party because there was no other kind of leadership available to them and they never questioned it because the Vietnamese
Communist Party at that time claimed to rid colonial rule and bring back some kind of dignity to the Vietnamese people, that was all. It was also somehow shall we say obvious to them that with massive American presence in South Vietnam they continue with the same idea of getting rid of foreign rule in the country without understanding anything else. That was a very simple thing and that also went through the ordinary people in the countryside and whatever you may say and claim and argue, you have to face a very sad reality that the massive shelling, bombing by American bombs and American weapons on those very ordinary people, would prevent them from understanding any kind of ideological conflict. They were not able to understand that.

RV: They simply wanted that bombing to stop.
NXP: To stop.
RV: And they wanted foreign presence out.
NXP: As they would expect the communist Vietnamese the assassination, the acts of terrorism in the villages, in the hamlets, but then you see the Communist cadres at the very grass root levels, they work in very concrete details. That is to say when they perpetrated their terrorist acts, they did it very precisely on individuals whom they claimed were traitors to the country and that those people also commit horrible crimes against the people. It was not blind terrorism, not at all. That is to say they didn’t go in there and just spray the offices of the Saigon people, Saigon government people. They assassinated people very specifically claiming that those people were traitors to the nation. So the ordinary people in the country sides did not have any choice at all and I still hold that they did not make any choice, they just accept the situation, that is to say it was an impossible choice for them to choose the American way or the communist way but in the end, by the end of the day if you force them through your dialectic of terror to make a choice, they would go Vietcong instead of American.

RV: Because its Vietcong is Vietnamese and American is not.
NXP: Yes. That is to say that I have to be killed even, or my family or my family be killed, it probably be much better to be killed by Vietnamese than by an American, probably that is by the end of day what they had to accept. There was no choice, not much of a choice. But I think that the main calamity of the Vietnamese people since the 1940s was that they were never given a choice, they never had that opportunity to have a
say because it was, I don’t know how, that you could have the will of the people in those years of the 1940s and ‘50s, the notion of democracy and freedom, political liberties were just beginning to come in to the people and I say here a horrible thing, but I don’t believe that whatever elections that you could have held, in North or South Vietnam in the 1940s, the 1950s, the 1960s were much meaningful to the large mass of the ordinary people. Because you never had elections in the history of the Vietnamese nation, the Chinese or even the Southeast Asian countries in their four thousand years of history never had elections.

RV: Are the Vietnamese people today capable of making a choice if they were given free elections, would they understand, would they be able to make that leap?

NXP: Oh, yes after thirty years since the signing of the Paris Agreement they are now beginning to understand what you mean by elections, but then you see you have to bring down real democracy to the grass root, to the grass root. If you continue to have the Vietnamese Communist Party running the lives of the people from the hamlets, the villages, up to the National Assembly then I don’t believe much in those elections and it is much more I think in the ability of the ordinary people in the villages or the hamlets to get a better living standard in order to really appreciate what the political liberties mean because when you hardly have enough to eat and you ask people to make political choices that wouldn’t mean much. It’s still a long way to go.

RV: Okay, sir let’s talk about your initial days of going into re-education and I’d asked you about, did you really think that it was going to last thirty days, how realistic was that to you?

NXP: Well, to begin with it was a very difficult period, just after the fall of Saigon, the days following the fall of Saigon because I’m sure that no one had the very clear idea what would happen even to the general population and then we realized that except for the presence of the North Vietnamese troops and the Soviet tanks the administration of the town was not very clear. We were told them, right afterwards that it was put under military rule and the three- star general, To Gin Ta, who was the commanding general of the Vietcong forces and who was of course in the commanding generals, among the commanding generals of the North Vietnamese troops, except for the presence of those North Vietnamese troops they were very young, in their late teens, that
was probably also true with the large majority of the American troops in South Vietnam, they were in their late teens too. We were told that the Saigon general metropolitan area would be put under military rule of General To Gin Ta but there was nothing else so we were completely in the dark what we were supposed to do, so during those, nearly a whole week I would say after the fall of Saigon with the reunion and the family with the uncles and all other relatives, that I was able to circulate very freely, went about the town and took the uncles and the other relatives for a tour because they were really astonished by the standard of living, by the buildings and the cars, they didn’t see so many cars in their whole lives. We were waiting to see what we were supposed to do and I personally was very aware that some kind of retaliation would be taken against the former high-ranking officials of the Saigon government.

RV: What did you expect to happen to you?

NXP: Well, to begin with, to be arrested because there were also a few arrests in Saigon, but it was just isolated situation in the various precincts but it was not widespread, we did not have, see no people being arrested or taken into the wall or something in the trees. I was told later that in some remote areas in South Vietnam there were some of those actions but in Saigon it did not happen. And we just waited to see what were required. I was mainly concerned for the safety of my parents, not because they did anything bad in their lives but my presence in the family house would be a danger to them so that was it. So when it was decreed that all the high ranking officials of the former Saigon regime would have to report for re-education for a period of thirty days, so the first reaction I had was that well, I don’t think that in my case it will be thirty days, maybe the lower ranking officials it will be thirty days I waited to see whether there were additional instructions for the higher ranking officials of the Saigon government, but there was none. So we were put all in the same boat, if I may say so, that was to say anybody above the rank of Chief of Service, that is to day you may have a directorate, a director and right under you would have various services and if you are the head of a service then you have to report for the thirty day re-education. In the Saigon administration you have the ministry and then after that you have the Direct General and after the Direct General you have the directorates and after the directorates you have the services. And in the Army that would be the Second Lieutenant up, so that goes and my
uncles then said to me “oh, yes that would be a good thing for you to go for that thirty
day re-education period. Then you would learn much more about our side.” That was the
expression they used, the did not communist side, or non-communist side or puppets and
the nationalists but in our discussion in family we always use the expression my side and
your side.

RV: Did they know that, or have any inclination that it would last longer than
thirty days for you?

NXP: They didn’t give me that impression at all. I think they also believe it
themselves. In fact later on we will find out that General To Ming Ta, the South
Vietnamese general sincerely put out those thirty days but then it did not exclude that
some special cases may have other special treatment but he was sincere because by the
end of that period of thirty day there were a convoy of trucks, Army trucks coming from
Saigon to our camp to bring us back home, but then on the way it received instructions to
turn back, so I don’t know whether it was a show or not but that was what the general
population saw and I was told later on that it was really the intention of General Ta to
have those thirty days re-education for those people with the understanding that the
special cases would receive special treatment, but that was his idea. As we know
eventually General Ta was in big disagreement with the North Vietnamese officials and
was sacked from his position. Later he wrote a book on the victory of the revolutionaries
taking Saigon and the book circulated a few days and was confiscated completely and
withdrawn from circulation and I was told that he was even under some kind of a house
arrest. That would happen also to many of those so-called Vietcong officials, the South
Vietnamese people in the ranks of the NLF because as soon as the North Vietnamese
officials came down to take over the administration of Saigon and of South Vietnam,
most of those South Vietnamese were put aside, that was the beginning of the big clean-
up but then we were sent to that rallying point, long time which the place was to be an
orphanage.

RV: Long Ton Orphanage.

NXP: Yes, orphanage and we were about to be housed there.

RV: Could you bring anything with you?
NXP: Yes, very little things for thirty days, a little bit of pocket money too. But then it was rapidly discovered by the families where we were, it was not difficult to find out that so members of family flocked to the orphanage, tired to get in to have visits but were not allowed, but they did allow to send in letters and some money to pass to the inmates and we were kept there exactly for thirty days.

RV: What were your living conditions like there?

NXP: Oh, it was very primitive. It was completely empty, the orphanage was completely empty, no furniture whatsoever and there were buildings with aluminum sheet roofing and it was just tiles, very primitive tiles as the floor. We slept on the floor and the food was provided twice a day, lunch and dinner by the administration, very primitive too but we had rice. There was no shortage of rice in Saigon and it was amazing too because just after the fall of Saigon there was no disruption in power, electricity, the utilities and everything went very normal because all the old machinery of the Saigon administration continued to function for those things.

RV: Did you know anybody there with you at Long Ton?

NXP: I was able to recognize about a dozen who I met before but the rest I didn’t know at all although everybody seemed to know me because I must say since 1968 I went to Paris and were no longer in Saigon, returned occasionally for a few days each time and did not know many people in the Saigon administration.

RV: Who in your family visited you?

NXP: No one. I think the kids were at the gates to bring in letters and some money and there was a canteen that you could buy noodles, instant noodles and sugar, coffee and things like that.

RV: Did you purchase some?

NXP: Oh, yes because I couldn’t eat their kind of cooking so I bought a lot of those instant noodles which was easier to eat.

RV: How much did you weigh when you first went into Long Ton?

NXP: A hundred and fifty something pounds, I think I was about seventy-two kilos when I left Paris. But then afterwards, one morning we were designated by name to take our bags and packages and get on a truck, an army truck, so there was a small convoy and we were about a hundred to be gathered there that morning and we were
taken to the prison, real prison because in Saigon there were two large prisons, Chu Wa
prison right inside the town, in the city and the other one, the suburb, out of Saigon the
Tu Duc Se and we were taken there, a hundred of us.

RV: What did you feel when you realized thirty days were up and you weren’t
going home?

NXP: We were really deceived but I was not surprised because I always thought
that in my case there would be some special treatment. So when I was taken to the prison
it was more or less what I’d expected so I just waited to see what’s next.

RV: Were you very talkative, did you talk a lot?

NXP: No, not at all. They didn’t ask anything during the thirty-day period in
Long Ton Orphanage. We were free to move around, to gather day and night and it was
kind of a picnic.

RV: Did you talk to your fellow prisoners very much?

NXP: Not much, because I didn’t know them and the few that I recognized there I
didn’t talk to.

RV: So Tu Doc, this is a conventional prison?

NXP: Just a formal prison, very well known too.

RV: And what kind of conditions were there there?

NXP: We were put in cells.

RV: Were you in a private cell or with how many people?

NXP: I was put in a cell, probably the cream of the cream as the French say. WE
were about twenty in that cell.

RV: How big was the cell?

NXP: I would say that would be about six meters wide fifteen meters long, no
windows whatsoever.

RV: Six by fifteen?

NXP: Yes, big iron door and then you have openings at the ceiling, very wide
opening for the air and the light to come int. That was it.

RV: Was there a screen or could you see the stars and the sky?
NXP: Well, I think the rook was overlapping with the walls outside so we couldn’t see much of the sky but there was the light coming in and the air coming in. Of course no air conditioning or fans of any sort.

RV: Very hot?

NXP: Yes, and very hot and then in the early morning by five am, that’s waking time, we were taken to the so-called bathrooms and then to have our toilet there.

RV: What was that like?

NXP: Oh, it was just, I will say lots like those water taps, serie of them, you just used them collectively and afterwards we would have a small walk in the courtyard and then back into the cell.

RV: How long were you outside the cell?

NXP: Oh, probably half an hour and half an hour of freshening up in the morning, so like within an hour back into the cell again. In the evening they would allow us to go out another hour like that, go to the bathroom and such. At lunch time the door would be open and then when we would have the possibility to go out in the courtyard to eat.

RV: How many meals did you have?

NXP: Twice a day.

RV: No breakfast, just lunch and?

NXP: No breakfast, there a little bit, there was no breakfast.

RV: So you woke up very hungry every morning?

NXP: Yes, well you just wait for lunch, it’s okay. I don’t usually have breakfast anyway. But many of them brought their own things, they still have a few things there and there was also the possibility to get help from the guards, to buy things, cigarettes and sugar.

RV: How would you do that?

NXP: You just ask the guards, give him the money. They were quite friendly, very courteous and friendly.

RV: Were these NVA troops or?

NXP: No, South Vietnamese.

RV: South Vietnamese guarding South Vietnamese.

NXP: Yes.
RV: Interesting. What kind of so-called re-education went on at Tu Doc?
NXP: It was nothing at all.
RV: No political talks?
NXP: Strictly nothing at the Long Ton Orphanage and then in the Tu Doc prison
the only we had was listening to the radio to a very strong Lao speaker.
RV: In the camp, outside.
NXP: In the camp, in the whole prison, that was it. Was there any reading of the
newspaper. I can’t remember in the Tu Doc prison, we had even reading of the
newspapers.
RV: What about any conversations with your fellow inmates?
NXP: Very little because I think everybody was a bit cautious not to say bad
things. It impressed me very much because the first time I met acquaintances, lots of
people whom I didn’t know and in my cell there were mainly high officials on the police,
high officials from the Central Intelligence office and then a few Cabinet ministers who I
didn’t know at all because I didn’t meet them before and some political leaders. There
was an amazing case there of gray old me, white haired white beard, old guy, he was in
his 70s that was new on the Cabinet who was the honorary chairmen of the Hu Can Dan
party and the Pu Man Dong party and he was a kind of, even a kind of deputy prime
minister with Ho Chi Minh in 1945 in Hanoi and he was even the boss of General Giap
for defense. When Ho Chi Minh tried to get some so-called coalition with the Nationalist
parties, the traditional political parties. And he was there with me in that cell and later on
I was told that because of his age and also when you open the history books, high schools
in North Vietnam you have lots of these photos with Ho Chi Minh and they call the
September Revolution but then he went really anti-communist had a bloody fight with the
Communist Party. Eventually I was told that he was allowed to go back to his village in
North Vietnam, under house arrest and die there eventually.
RV: Did you speak with him much?
NXP: Oh, yes he liked very much to have a conversation in the evening.
RV: He knew who you were?
NXP: Yes, and he was not very keen to talk to anybody else but he accepted to sit
down with me in the evening and then we’d talk about all kinds of things. He wanted to
know what happened in Paris and when I based in England and things like that, very nice man.

RV: How long would you talk in the evenings?
NXP: Oh, an hour or two.
RV: Is this after you’ve eaten and gone back into the cell or was it when you were outside?
NXP: After we’d lock up in the cell because by five PM according to law we must be locked up in the cell. There was also other interesting people there. There was a colonel of the Saigon Army, I happened to know him very, occasionally before and he was made at one time the head of our central intelligence office, that is the Saigon CIA and so he was the director of our CIA and that was the time of General Nguyen Can took power from Big Minh, he was made the head of the Saigon intelligence agency. Afterwards he was put in Phnom Penh as military attaché something and he was made responsible to spy or get intelligence from the what they call Base R which is the headquarters of the Vietcong near the Tay Ninh Cambodian border. It turned out he was in the same cell there and he said Phong, head of our CIA, but he also had an elder sister who was also a colonel of the Hanoi army intelligence, a colonel too. Then I found out through conversation with him during that period together in the same cell at Tu Doc prison and that many of the Vietcong leaders liked Tu Man Dan, at the level of Lawyer Nguyen Huu Tho and Dinh Bin Town, those Vietcong leaders of NLF leaders very often visited Saigon when we as the head of our intelligence agency and most of them stayed at his house.

RV: At his what?
NXP: At his house.
RV: Really,
NXP: Yes. So I was really surprised to learn those things.
RV: How long were you there?
NXP: I can’t remember exactly but I think we were there probably two months or so.
RV: How did you feel being locked up in a prison cell?
NXP: First time, that my first experience with prison but that was really bad, really bad, not because of the physical conditions but it was very bad because nobody told you anything. What would happen to you, would you stay here for a long time or not, would you be taken to court to be judged or something, so there was nothing at all, completely nothing at all. And the guards were quite friendly too. We didn’t have bad guards, not at all, probably because mainly because we were such a special group to begin with. There was only one female.

RV: In the cell with you?

NXP: No, in that group of about one hundred. She was put at the very back of the prison by herself and her name was Twae Dies Yuli and I was told that she was the head of what was called the Swain brigade, in the intelligence service she was responsible for recruiting, training and using female spies in espionage and counterespionage and she was the head of this squad. I think she took in the end, more than ten years of prison and eventually was allowed to go to the States and still lives in the States now, running a kind of a shop or something and I think she’s calling her shop the Swain Shop in memory of her past.

RV: Her old squad. So you were not given any information about what might happen to you and your thirty days obviously were up before, now you’re there for another sixty days or so, how did you, did you have any link at all to the outside, did any of your family members ever?

NXP: Strictly, nothing at all. It was, they didn’t know where we were and of course they learned from the Long Ton Orphanage people there that about a hundred of us were taken somewhere but they didn’t know where.

RV: They might have thought that you were killed or dead, or did they?

NXP: Of course, at home they were very worried, if only I could pass the word that I was all right but there was no way and it was really probably the hardest part of the whole story, even afterwards when I was send to North Vietnam it was not that bad because those few weeks at the Tu Duc prison was really mentally was unbearable for not knowing, that’s all if I were told what would happen with me. I was also worried for the people at home but from the guards that we talked to in the Tu Doc prison we had the general impression that life continued normally in Saigon city, there was nothing drastic
happening to the people there and I was hopefully thinking that my old parents and the family there would be all right because they haven’t done anything bad.

RV: What kind of influence did your uncles have upon your imprisonment?

NXP: Nothing at all and that is the rule, even now that they don’t intervene but then later on when I was in North Vietnam I was informed very officially one Sunday I remember by kind of a vice minister responsible for security came down to see me and told me then that a total of eighteen relatives, high ranking, of the Hanoi administration had signed a petition vouching for me asking me to be released in their custody and that vice minister came down and luckily said that the Party government regretted very much but could not give satisfaction to the petition and so I also jump wrapped it, at that time I was really skinny. I said with the weight I Had now, how come that I am much heavier than the eighteen relatives, so we had a good laugh, that’s all.

RV: How did you deal with that mentally at TU Doc, what did you do inside your head, how did you deal with that?

NXP: I can’t remember how I managed to go through that very hard period but it was really in the thought very, very hard there and then I remember another Vietnamese saying that the death of separation when you had that way, but it was really bad, really bad.

RV: Did you remain hopeful that something would come out of us?

NXP: Oh, yes always. There is still always a little bit of hope somewhere but I was very worried for the family, that was the main problem because nothing would prevent them from taking have action against the remembrance of my father.

RV: Did you consider death?

NXP: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

RV: How so?

NXP: Well because I expected always the worst from the Communist side and maybe there would be kick out of the house, put in the street, then if they confiscated all of their belongings and things like that, I thought of all kinds of things.

RV: For your family, right?

NXP: What about for yourself?

NXP: Oh, for myself I didn’t think much about myself.
RV: You didn’t think that you would be executed?
NXP: Well, all those things passed through my mind but the attitude I had at that
time about my own self, I would only want to be told what would happen to me, that’s
all. I was prepared to except anything, if only I were told.
RV: Since you weren’t told?
NXP: So I weren’t told, that was a guessing game the worst of the worse, to be
executed or to be locked up for the rest of your life, but it seems that my torment was
much more on not being told and I even thought at one time that those guys intentionally
adopted that kind of game to make you suffer. I am not telling you.
RV: Do you think it was intentional?
NXP: I thought that way, but I don’t know.
RV: Did you contemplate suicide?
NXP: Oh, no, never.
RV: No, why not?
NXP: I don’t know, it was not in the tradition of the family to do things like that
and I have always been against those things.
RV: Do you remember what they broadcast over the loudspeakers in the camp,
what kind of message they were trying to send to you, what were they saying?
NXP: I think that they carried the Communist lines, that is to say that they
liberated the country and then they chased the imperialists out and the puppet
administration collapsed and things like that, that was the theme.
RV: How did your fellow inmates react to that kind of message?
NXP: We didn’t even want to listen to it. When we have those radio broadcasts
we thought of something and then we try and go on with something in the cell.
RV: Was there any kind of leadership developed within your cell and within the
camp?
NXP: No not at all, not at all. Nobody wanted to be the leader of anything any
more.
RV: I want to ask this question now and I want to ask it later, but you seem to
have a very good sense of humor about this very tragic experience in your life, how is
that?
NXP: Well, probably my British humor acquired during my stay in England. That was a way for me also to calm myself down because jokes always pop into my head, all the time, so I tried to make use of those things and in the end it became kind of a second state of mind throughout the whole, those years in prison.

RV: Did you talk to yourself or would you tell the jokes to the people in the cell with you?

NXP: Mostly to myself but sometimes I also passed the joke to others, try and make them laugh too.

RV: Were you successful?

NXP: Sometimes, because it was kind of a black humor. For example we hardly have meet when we were imprisoned in North Vietnam because even the ordinary people in the villages didn’t have meat and we may have rice and meat on only four occasions in the year, that is for Tet, for Labor Day, for the National Day and then Christmas and the New Year. It was really funny because the amount of meat that we would receive with a little bit of rice, not half the bowl of rice but that’s for big occasions, that’s for major holidays of the year. We were divided in groups of ten for our meals because the soup would be there for ten people, the rice would be there to be divided for ten people.

RV: This is in North Vietnam?

NXP: In North Vietnam and the piece of meat I can say to you literally which was in the can of soup and then you fish it out, then its called meat because you are supposed to have meat on those big occasions and for a group of ten the piece of meat would be as big as your toe for ten people, a finger, a thumb and then we had to divide in ten equal pieces, then the joke we had there was the hand of the lizard.

RV: The hand of a lizard?

NXP: Yes, that’s your share of meat, the hand of the lizard, that is a Vietnamese expression, that big one.

RV: Would you all laugh at that?

NXP: Oh, yes. And then we had also incident because I was in the group of ten and for unknown reasons I was put among the very old people, in their 60s and 60s.

RV: But you were in your 40s.
NXP: I was not even barely in my 40s and then there were two very old guys who were in their 70s, one was Tan Ho and he was a horse cart driver all his life, completely illiterate in the Go Cong province, in a small village there and we found ourselves in the cell with him. We were very surprised that an illiterate horse cart driver to be there with us and we at the beginning did not ask him why he was sent there for re-education at that age. But he was a nice guy and there was another one, a political leader of a political party who was in his 70s also, those two guys fought each other all the time. They got into rounds and then at one time when we had those hands of lizard divided among us, the poor horse cart driver was not looking at his piece of meat, he look outside the window, the other old guy took the hand of the lizard of the horse cart driver and ate it. So a split second later the horse cart driver said, “what happened to my hand of the lizard, where is it?” And they had a fight then too.

RV: Really, a physical fight?

NXP: Yes, a physical fight because he suspected the guy only, there was no one there who would take his that.

RV: No one would say what happened?

NXP: And then they went out into the courtyard and began to fight, but they were so old that neither of them managed to hit the other and fell on the ground each time he tried to punch the other one, fell on the ground and that was a kind of spectacle that we had through, as entertainment. The living conditions were very hard, so from the Tu Doc prison, one morning very early, by five in the morning we were called into the courtyard and then we were chained two by two, so I was.

RV: At your ankle or hand?

NXP: And with chains, because they did not have, how do you call that.

RV and NXP: (Simultaneously) Handcuffs.

NXP: And they cut it in pieces of chain so they put us together. I was put together with a Congressman, member of the National Assembly of Saigon who was a lawyer that joined Thieu to become one of those the members of National Senate. They used a kind of lock to lock us, two by two there and I was even able to pull a joke when we were pulled two by two there, chained together. I said to the guard, “what happens if we want to pee?” The guard said, “Don’t worry, I be there. I’ll unlock you to go to pee.”
And that’s what happened that very early morning and we were taken from the Tu Doc prison in army trucks again to the airport, Tan Son Nhut airport. We were put on a C-130 plane.

RV: How many people with you?

NXP: The hundred that we were.

RV: The whole hundred, okay.

NXP: The whole hundred, then took off. We all said where we are going to the Cumdao prison, that’s a very famous old French prison but then after about half an hour we realized that we were going north.

RV: How did you feel?

NXP: I didn’t feel anything in particular. Okay, we were taken to North Vietnam.

RV: But you knew this meant, you must have known that this meant you were not going home?

NXP: Yes, I didn’t expect to go home anyway. We didn’t expect because there was no indication or sign of any sort that we would be released. We were just curious and we wanted really to know what’s next, that’s all. And it was no surprise to me that we were going north.

RV: The guards wouldn’t tell you anything?

NXP: They didn’t know even themselves we realized. There were about two or three of them in the plane with us, you know the C-130 open up at the back and with that kind of plane that’s certainly brought up before take off, you see you have lots of steam coming out, seeing as I didn’t see anything and in a way I was personally relieved that we were not going to the Cumdao prison because when you go there, you hardly go out, it’s an island as you know. So when we landed in Dellem airport, that was the military airport of North Vietnam we discovered also that the plane was flown by former Saigon air force pilots and then they were put into the Army trucks with us to go to re-education camp and so there’s a big laugh. I even said to one of them I said. “You need only about two or three degrees to arrive in the Philippines and nobody would know.” We even joke and say even the guards would be very happy.

RV: Why do you think they?
NXP: They didn’t think of it.

RV: They didn’t think of it.

NXP: Yes, they didn’t think of it and so those Saigon air force pilot joined me in the re-education camp because they were the one who were able to fly those things, North Vietnamese wouldn’t know how to fly those C-130s.

RV: Were these American C-130s left over from the war?

NXP: Yes.

RV: Took you to prison in Hanoi, flown by South Vietnamese Air Force pilots. It’s amazing.

NXP: When you got off the plane.

RV: When you got off the plane.

NXP: We were put in army trucks again.

RV: Could you tell a difference geography or just kind of the climate?

NXP: Oh, yes North Vietnam is complete different than South Vietnam. I had that impression right away.

RV: Had you been there before?

NXP: No, never you see and most of us never had the opportunity to go to North Vietnam except a few North Vietnamese who went down south in 1955 at the partition of the country and many of them were very moved to be back in Hanoi because we went through the city of Hanoi.

RV: You drove through Hanoi?

NXP: You have to see Hanoi to get out again to the countryside rocks and go to Hai Tai, about thirty miles from there.

RV: What did Hanoi look like?

NXP: Ooh, it was bad to us coming from Saigon and the Saigon we knew was really terrible, dirty, broken down houses and things like that and there were very drab people in the streets and not many cars and the few cars were all from the Soviet thing, it was terrible. That was not a surprise to us, to us the Southerners.

RV: Had it been rebuilt from some of the bomb damage?

NXP: No, we didn’t see anything rebuilt at all.

RV: You did see some ruins or not?
NXP: During the trip no, because in fact there were only a few places destroyed in Hanoi, it was not widespread at all.

RV: Right, just in the center by the railway station there, right.

NXP: So we went through, some of the kids threw rocks at us and insults and so on, little kids, there’s so many people.

RV: They knew who it was?

NXP: Oh, yes they came to see right away and we were still chained two by two.

RV: Was the truck open in the back?

NXP: Yes, open completely but in Saigon when we were moved we had the batches one. But then it took us about a couple of hours to arrive at the camp which was considered the number one camp North Vietnam, that was the A-15, number camp A-15 and it was for the Hatai ken, because it belong to the Ha Tai village. And we were put in the courtyard sitting there, still chained and then the guards began to unlock and then when it arrived to me and that member of the National, he couldn’t find the key and then everybody went in to the barracks and we were just the two of us there still sitting in the courtyard. He couldn’t find the key. The guy forgot to bring the key or something because it was just pushed to lock it, that’s all. So we had to wait for him to go and get a saw and then so we manage in the end to free ourselves and get into the building but I was assigned to the only brick building, because there were about a dozen of those buildings but there was only one brick building. And that brick building was used to have American prisoners of war there until 1973, so that building would house about a hundred people.

RV: How big was this camp would you say overall?

NXP: Oh, it was a big camp because we had, each building you can house about a hundred. In the are where we were allowed to circulate there were about a dozen of those buildings but the one I was designated to occupy was the only brick building, all the others were kind of a rach, hay, muck type building.

RV: What was the inside of your brick building like, was it divided into a number of cells?

NXP: No, it was just a common room with bunks, wooden bunks and then at the one end there was the toilets, about four of them above ground with a hole in it but that’s
it. There was nothing, there were windows with bars and double bunks so I was given one below with the chaplain on top of me, it was about eighty centimeters wide and about two meters long, that’s our living space. It was a big change because it was on wooden.

RV: Right, the mattress.

NXP: Compared to the concrete bunks that we had in Tu Doc prison.

RV: Did you have a mattress?

NXP: No, it was kind of a straw mat, never mattress.

RV: Okay, any running water?

NXP: No, no water whatsoever in the cell and outside too, so we had to get our water from a kind of pond.

RV: A pond?

NXP: Yes, a pond. You use everything in that pond, you wash your clothes, you wash yourself.

RV: And your water. Was it purified after you, for your drinking?

NXP: Oh, no forget that. And we drank only the water from the kitchen, the boiled water from the kitchen and it was given to us for a kind of what they call it, tea, a reddish color liquid boiled in a kind of leaves to replace tea and so we were very to drink always that water.

RV: How many guards were there in this building?

NXP: I don’t know exactly, the whole total number of the guards there because there were different areas. The generals and the high-ranking officers of the Saigon area were put in a separate area with high walls. We knew that they were on the other side but we were not allowed to communicate or to go to other side and now and then we saw them walking in the fields, but the military, the high-ranking military were put there. And we on the other side, so –called civilians and there were about twelve hundred of us in the whole camp, the number of guards I would guess it would be something like thirty to fifty people including the patrol guards, we were put under major.

RV: Were they in uniform?

NXP: They were in uniform.

RV: What kind of weapons did they carry?
NXP: No weapons, they didn’t carry any weapons except for the patrol guards, then they have their AK-47.

RV: Any guard towers?

NXP: No towers, no towers, just high walls, but big entrance gates to have the guards there and then you have the patrol outside the walls and they were armed. But inside the prison they had no arms at all.

RV: What was the terrain like outside the prison, was it mountainous, was it flat fields or woods?

NXP: That part of Hai Te is rather flat and you have the villages outside, the markets and the ordinary farmers, they were outside. So we were very near the population.

RV: Was there any talk of escape initially, at the beginning?

NXP: I don’t know but there was no talk about it and nobody dared to organize anything or even organize our cells so each one for himself and we just followed instructions, that’s all.

RV: There was no organization amongst themselves.

NXP: They impose an organization, the prison administration. They divide first of us, they divide us in group of ten for the meals and then for the cleaning the course, the toilets, cleaning and so we worked by group of tens and there was nothing to do at all for whole first year. We were not told anything, we were not supposed to do anything, just vegetate there.

RV: You just stated in this house all day?

NXP: Yes, but they allow us to move in the courtyard.

RV: How often?

NXP: The whole day long, then just lock up after five PM till five AM but for the rest of the time we were allowed to circulate and talk and meet.

RV: All 1,200?

NXP: The civilian, among the civilian and then the military we didn’t know very much what happened to them, they were on the other side of the wall. So that was it for the whole year, we just listen to the radio through the loudspeaker and then the reading of
the *Nguyen Nung* newspaper, that is the official of the North Vietnam Communist Party, the reading of the newspaper took place before lights out in the evening.

RV: They would read it over the loudspeaker?

NXP: No, each cell. They asked us to sit around and listen to one of us reading the newspaper, that’s it. Then during the day you have the Radio Hanoi playing through the loudspeaker.

RV: All day?

NXP: [Laughs] All day.

RV: All day long?

NXP: Really, all day long.

RV: Talking, songs or?

NXP: All kinds, music and then political articles and stuff.

RV: What would they say?

NXP: The same thing all the time, under the leadership of the Communist Party and then the liberation of the whole country. We didn’t pay much attention to these things, it was just noise.

RV: So it never effectively brainwashed or affected anybody significantly, any of the prisoners?

NXP: Nothing at all. You didn’t even have any lectures and comments. They were not organized yet. We had the impression they didn’t know what to do, I think probably among themselves, maybe they wanted to try us or exploit us or do something, but I think there was no clear decision. It was only after a year that we began to have indoctrination sessions. We were asked to write our self-confession.

RV: Initially, that first year?

NXP: Yes, during the first year. Occasionally they’d come down and make us write.

RV: Well, what would they say to you?

NXP: They say just write what you did in the past with the Saigon government, things like that. They also gave us impression that the more sincere, earnest and the more complete your confession, that would reflect good of you, things like that. In other words, the more you admit that you committed crimes against the nation and people and
be the henchmen of the imperialist Americans and things like that, that was impression we had.

RV: What did you write?

NXP: I wrote about, I don’t thirty-seven pages I remember and I said well, I was in the government, I was involved with social welfare and labor and then that eventually I was at Paris Peace Talks and very briefly what happened at the Paris Peace Talks, and we have the meetings weekly and most of the things that we did there we did together with the North Vietnamese and the NLF delegations. I said also that the officials of the Hanoi government and of the NLF would know much more about those things than I do, so it was public to everybody and fool stuff. But there was a guy in our cell, he wrote more that five thousand pages for months. He admitted all the crimes that he committed against the Vietnamese Communists.

RV: His so-called crimes or actually were they?

NXP: He was a political leader of the Dai Viet or something, one of the patriotic groups and so he tried to, as he claimed, he tried to remember the bloody fight that he had with the Vietnamese communists from the late 1940s and even on to the communist that he kill himself, things like that.

RV: Was this, when they said for you guys to be honest and to be more sincere?

NXP: And then he keep on saying that he’s now very much conscious of all those crimes against the Vietnamese people and nation. Eventually he was also made by the prison administration as one of the group leaders among the prisoners because eventually we were also divided and when we organized the labor teams and so he was chosen to be one of those things. You know in all prisons you have that kind of system and he was a kind of anathema too, you report to the prison authorities what was happening.

RV: Did you all know that?

NXP: We all know that of course.

RV: So you didn’t tell him very much or talk to him very much.

NXP: He even invent things to report, but even the prison authorities, because I eventually got on very good terms with the director of the prison, Major Yung, and I even joked to him one day, I said. “that chap is doing a very good job for you.” And Major Yung, the prison director he told me nobody believes him anyway. But he was beaten up
once, because when we arrived at the camp there were about fifteen former commanders of Saigon who were sent to North Vietnam, airborne, to sabotage things in North Vietnam. He was caught in the late 50s, early 60s and they have been there for eighteen years, about fifteen of them. So one day that group of fifteen got hold of the guy I mentioned and beat him up. [Laughing]

RV: Really?

NXP: [Still laughing]. Yes.

RV: Why don’t we take a break for today? Then we’ll pick up later.

Nguyen Xuan Phong: So, the fall of Saigon, then.
Richard Verrone: Yes, today is February 7, 2003 and I’m continuing my oral history interview with Ambassador Phong. Sir, let’s pick up with your stay in the re-education camp outside of Hanoi, in the north and this is 1975. I was wondering if we could talk about what a typical day was like there for you and I know it changed from time to time, but let’s start with the morning, when would you get up in the morning and what would you do?

NXP: Well, first of all right after the fall of Saigon on April the 30th, 1975 we were then very anxious, anguished rather what would happen to us and then as you know a couple of weeks later we were all out into re-education camp. So I was said to that Long Ten orphanage for thirty days, as it was supposed to be and then we were not released after the thirty days, I was moved then with a small group of about a hundred of what you say, the dangerous cases, the high officials of the police, of the intelligence, the political parties of the former Saigon regime. And then we were in the Tu Doc prison, just in the suburb of Saigon for just a few weeks and one morning we were assembled, gathered in the courtyard of the prison and then chained, literally chained tow by two, we were taken to the airport and then flown to North Vietnam, so we landed in the Jellum airport, it was the military airport of Hanoi and we were taken to a camp called camp A-15, just about thirty miles out of Hanoi. That is the village of Hai Tai, just about a couple of hours drive on the bad roads, you know Vietnam. So I landed there from 1975 to
1980. I was not moved anywhere but many of the other prisoners were moved from one camp to another for various reasons. But I think I was put there with what we’ll call the Crem de la Crem and we were there also with the Generals of the Saigon Army but they, those high-ranking Army officers were completely isolated from the rest of the civilians.

RV: And I remember you saying there was a wall there?

NXP: A very big wall.

RV: And you couldn’t see over it.

NXP: Couldn’t see and now and then we could see them going to work in the fields but that was much later on. In the beginning it was completely isolated. Of course there was no visit whatsoever for the first four years, and we were allowed to send letters home and receive letters from home, but the families didn’t know at all where we were. When we were in the Saigon area, of course it was not difficult for the families to find out, but when we were flown to North Vietnam, then completely blackout, completely blackout. There was a kind of dispatching point at the Chi Hua prison, the largest prison in Saigon there to send packages, to send letters, to send money if you want to the prisoners, but the family didn’t know. In my case it was rather special because my family was able to find out after about a couple of years where I was because they guess and the relatives, the Communist relatives say in our family also guess that in my case I would be in North Vietnam rather than in the camps in South Vietnam. Of course through the Catholic channels, because even in the north you have to find a Catholic community there, they channeled back news from where I was, just outside Hanoi to the Catholic nuns in the Saigon area and when I was with the welfare ministry in 1966 I helped a lot of those Catholic nuns and of course they rush to my parents to pass the word that I was at Hai Tai Camp, Camp A-15 in North Vietnam, so my parents were able to know that I was in North Vietnam at that camp but in many families they didn’t.

RV: Two years for this word to get south?

NXP: Yes, to get the words back.

RV: So, did you know that they knew?

NXP: No, I didn’t know that until I got word from my family and they were only able to communicate with me in the fourth year, because at that time, that was the beginning of the visits and my family had people to go there and visit me among the very
first visitors. I was the privileged ones to receive visits from my family among the very first ones and that was my aunt who went there.

RV: Your aunt?

NXP: Yes, claiming to be my sister because only the direct relatives were allowed to go and visit, that is to say your parents, your wife or children, or your brothers and sisters, so my aunt was the one who dared to go there because she was a bit Vietcong too.

RV: She was a bit Vietcong?

NXP: Yes, she was very sympathetic to the Vietcong during that period.

RV: Did you know she was coming?

NXP: No, I didn’t know until she came and I was notified there was a visitor for me. When I first appear at the place where they allowed family to come and visit my aunt then cried out right away very loud, “I am your sister, I am your sister. I come here to visit you.” And I didn’t know what she was doing, so very obviously I said, “My aunt, what are you doing here?”

RV: What did she do?

NXP: And then she continued to say, “I am your sister, I am your sister.”

RV: What kind of room was this, was this outside in a courtyard or was it inside a room?

NXP: Its still inside the prison but there’s a place which was kind of an office near the offices of the guard, so that was it.

RV: Let me ask you about those four years before you had a visitor, how did you handle that, the separation from your family?

NXP: The first year was terrible, it was terrible firstly mentally for me and not knowing what happened to the family at home. I didn’t know anything about what happened to my parents or other members of the family, so that was a really a big worry, anguish, very acute anguish.

RV: How did you go from being so busy and having such important tasks in your everyday life to being in prison and having no tasks?

NXP: Completely for the first year there was nothing to do, they didn’t make us do anything so we just linger around all day and all evening before extinction of the lights and then legally we should be locked up from five PM to five AM at least for the night,
strictly lock up in your cells and we didn’t know anything, what was happening outside
and they did not bother at all to tell what would happen to us. We just continued to
remain there doing nothing, literally nothing and I had the impression that probably the
authorities at the time did not know exactly what they would like to do with us, that was
my impression. So they just gave us the two meals a day and a little bit of so-called
breakfast and the whole regimen if you can call it that way is legally we were granted
fifteen kilos of so-called cereals, that is to say rice or flour, or wheat flour or even some
kind of vegetables which would be considered as the equivalent to the rice or other kind
of cereals, like corn or oats, things like that. But the fifteen kilos, more oft what we got
most of the time was the Russian wheat flour, came from Haiphong and then trucks of the
prison would go there to bring back the flour, but when it arrived at the kitchen the fifteen
kilos per head would be something like ten to twelve, maximum.

RV: Why?
NXP: Well, lost during the transportation process and such. So you would be
given then about, I don’t know 150 grams or something for your meal and in morning
and it’s kind of a dough that they steam it so its would look like a biscuit here, you call it,
but not brown at all, its not baked, its steamed. In the morning, breakfast would consist
of a quarter of that 150-gram thing.

RV: Just for the record, you’re holding your hand out; it would fit in your hand,
very small?
NXP: Oh, yes. It is the size of a biscuit here and that you would cut in four, for
four people.

RV: Did you cut it, did they cut it for you or did you?
NXP: No, we had to cut it ourselves, but everybody watched very carefully how
you cut your thing to be very equitable for the four people to share that thing. Then you
had for lunch you also a whole one and then for dinner you had a whole one.

RV: Okay, so a quarter, a whole and a whole.
NXP: And a whole and a whole and that would be in the end the equivalent of
then kilos a month. And I just had that dough, steamed dough, period, nothing else.

RV: That’s all you had?
NXP: Yes, so legally that’s what we had.
RV: Water to drink?

NXP: Yes, so the water we wouldn’t be able, no running water at all but the kitchen would provide you with some kind of a hot drink, that is they boil it in order to be drinkable and they had some kind of leaves from a tree in North Vietnam which they try it and use it in lieu of, instead of tea, and so you have a reddish kind of beverage that you drink, and you had to drink that because if you drink something else you are did. So, we had then that kind of drink and that dough for each meal and then two spoonfuls of salted water, that is to go with the dough, to give some taste with is, salted taste.

RV: Would you put it on top of the dough or did you eat it from the spoon?

NXP: Well, I dip it into it so it would make it a bit salted and you are not supposed to keep that after your meal, you have to throw it on the ground because the salted water can be used to rot the bards of the windows and so they were very careful to control that you accumulate that kind of salted water or not and it would be a very major offense if you had accumulated that salted water.

RV: Did they have a guard watching you the whole time while you were eating?

NXP: Well, yes they have it permanently except from five PM to five AM we would be locked up in the cell but you have them guards, patrols, going round and round all those cells, but during the day there were guards in the courtyard and going about. They did not give the impression they watched you. They were busy with their things and we were completely free to move around in the camp, in the courtyard doing nothing for a whole year.

RV: Was it grass or dirt?

NXP: It was just dirt, completely no grass whatsoever.

RV: Now, I’m interested, they let you have knives to cut your food, couldn’t they, that could be used as a weapon or possibly?

NXP: No, they didn’t give us anything but we managed to find something to do that by our self, so most of the time we used pieces of bamboo that could be made kind of a wooden knife, we cut it, nobody was allowed even a razor blade so we began to have our beards and mustache growing.

RV: So you grew a beard, you had a beard?
NXP: Yes and everybody had it because there was nothing to, except those who didn’t have much beard or anything, but I look like much more that guess like an Arab than Vietnamese that first year. What they did do, was to make us listen to Hanoi Radio, all day long.

RV: In the courtyard?

NXP: With the communist fashion were very loud speakers all over the camp, its not really for us, the prisoners, but everybody for the, even people in the hamlet around, nearby. Of course at the locking time by five PM, as soon as the steel door of the cell was locked, we were assembled in the cell to listen to the reading of the Nung Nguyen newspaper, that is the official organ of the Vietnam Communist Party, that would last about an hour. Most of us would probably sleep too during the lecture.

RV: Who would read it?

NXP: They designated one of the inmates to read it.

RV: And your barracks again, was it a communal barrack or was it individual cells?

NXP: Yes, in that camp, A-15, there were about a dozen barracks like that but I was put in the only brick barrack, the sole, only brick barrack there which was used in fact to have the U.S. prisoners of war before 1973 and there were scratched inscriptions there on the concrete that was for the U.S. prisoners, it was the only brick barrack and that barrack would hold about one hundred people. There was nothing but wooden bunks on both sides and that would be, I would say about five or six meters wide and probably about twenty-five meters long, that would house a hundred people, two layers of bunks.

RV: Do you remember what the inscription said?

NXP: 1973, To Bun Mi, that means American POWs. I don’t know who wrote it.

RV: Did you see any markings, marking days or months, calendar?

NXP: No, nothing, nothing. It was very high up so I don’t know who wrote that. But the other barracks were just in kind of a hay, straw, muck type, that kind of with a thatched roof with the leaves off of attached type of roof. What happened was that after a few months, probably three or four months, then we had a big kind of storm and all of the mud barracks collapsed except for the one I was in, in brick and so the commanding
officer, Major Yung, I remember his name, a very nice guy, he was on the verge of
retiring, full Colonel, he was really distraught that time, because that morning when we
all woke up his camp was almost completely destroyed and then he was there lamenting
that how can I find means now to repair the barracks.

RV: He’s out there in front of you?
NXP: Yes, we were all there because we were collecting things, trying to put
things together and the storm happened during the night and that was a really traumatic
thing for the other inmates in those barracks. And there were people there, we were all
standing there, it was kind of a family atmosphere with that commanding officer, Major
Yung, I’m sorry not to call him Major and some of the inmates there said that well, we
need some cement and bricks and we can build ourselves these barracks. And the Major
there, said sure but how can we get the bricks and even more difficult, the cement? So
they were, they are discussing a lot and then a little bit later he was there talking to me, I
was there also with the others and I said, “Well, if we don’t have any bricks, any cement,
what will we do now.” And Major Yung said, “that’s a very big problem. I have to put a
request to the higher authorities.” I said, “well, why don’t we try to find out ways and
help ourselves because we cannot wait for the higher authorities.” I asked also, I asked
him how long it would take. He said maybe a year before they answer you, in a case like
that because it was on the principle of self-help, that was the way they operated. So I said
to Major Yung, “we have a couple of ponds.”

RV: A couple of what?
NXP: Ponds, here big ones, and that was used for everything. You washed your
clothes in there, you wash yourselves, you get the water from there to fill the little bit and
use it for your kitchen, for taking a bath or something, that is the only source of water that
you have there, you had that.

RV: So, you didn’t bathe in the pond, you took the water to another facility?
NXP: Invisible, we try and bring it into a basin and then from there we filter it and
get so-called potable water to sue but it was so dirty sometimes because you even have
toilet over the pond as you may have seen in the countryside.

RV: The toilets were over the pond?
NXP: Yes, as you know this is over, those benches there and they also breed fish in there, that is how why you have toiled on the pond, that is how you feed the fish, that is the traditional way to raise fish in the countryside.

RV: Okay, so let me get this straight, you had two ponds and the toilets were located over the ponds and so.

NXP: That is, there were some toilets there but it was mainly aimed at feeding the fish because in our barracks we also have our toilets. They are, for in example in my cell, we had four holes above ground and that was the toilets.

RV: Who would use the toilets out there by the pond?

NXP: Anybody, that is you are welcome, you are welcome to do that in order to feed the fish.

RV: Okay, so human waste.

NXP: And many of the in-mates also jump into there after a days work to refresh themselves and to wash their clothes too, in the hotter season.

RV: So, you’ve got human waste, you have fish being bred in there, you have people washing themselves, you use it for your water after you boil it obviously?

NXP: Yes, and then water the plants and the vegetables and so on, everything there. So I said to Major Yung, we can try and empty one and used the clay there to make bricks and I said, if I am not mistaken there are a number of guys from the Bien Hoa area among the in-mates and the and Bien Hoa area just outside Saigon, about fifty miles outside of Saigon, that’s where they make the bricks, the tiles, for the whole of the Saigon area, very well known for that activity. I’m sure that we can make the bricks and the tiles there, if we have that kind of thing to do that. And Major Yung said yes, but where would we find the combustion to make the fire, there’s no coal, there’s no.

RV: The kiln, for the kiln?

NXP: Yes, the kiln. I said well, we can gather the branches, lots of tree all around there, in that area, so you must have branches, you must have kind of trees there that you can use. I said we can try that. That’s what we did. The thousand and something inmates there began to empty the pond, one.

RV: With what, buckets?
NXP: With the traditional way. They have big cords there and you have a kind of, how you call it, you use it with the *ben mooe* type thing to have big basket and then that’s how two guys on both sides with those cords, you can just.

RV: Right, okay, yes I’ve seen those, they’re kind of slingy.

NXP: Yes, we can empty the whole thing, so everybody did that and lots of clay there.

RV: Did it go into the other pond or just out onto the dirt?

NXP: Out into the thing, yes, because the other pond was rather far away from that pond. But we managed to empty the pond and then lots of clay so we went down in there and took out chunks of clay and we pass out with thousand guys.

RV: What about the fish?

NXP: Well, they of course went somewhere, we didn’t know. The guards took care of that. There was not many anyway. We managed to have it and we began to have the bricks and the ties and we had that kiln built and it was, I think that kiln was able to make eight thousand bricks at each baking. Then it was a big success and Major Yung also said, “well, now we have to find the cement to build.” And I was the one to tell him; we sell the bricks and the tie, that’s all.

RV: To buy the cement.

NXP: Yes, we were producing like mad and there was no supply of bricks and ties in that area before so we were the, for the first time they were able to supply bricks and tie to the locals instead of having to go somewhere and bringing them back, so it was big success. We began to build our own prison there in the following years.

RV: How many buildings did you build?

NXP: Well, we were all there, about ten teams of masons and we built I think about nearly fifteen barracks. It became the most beautiful and the showcase of the whole of North Vietnam, you know the prison showcase. That’s where they took the Amnesty International, International Red Cross and other visitors to go and have a look there. For the construction experience there, I became a mason and then I was given the task of making beautiful the whole prison after we finished the barracks, so to design the gardens, fish ponds, flower beds and things like that. So, I had the best job in the camp with five or seven other guys.
RV: So you were like a landscape architect, designer?

NXP: Yes, and they left us very much alone because we were in creative work, so they did not come and push you to work hard anything like the other groups working in the fields or doing something else, so we were very, very lax. In fact, we produced quite of the gallant pottery, all those things that you grow flowers in and together with the friends there I tried to imitate a kind of porcelain, ceramic things for those flower beds and so on, so we did it with the cement only and then we sued paint outside and take care of the real impression to be ceramics with all kinds of colored. It became very famous, because the people in the area came and asked to buy, they put orders and it was so successful that we had orders from Hanoi and it was something of a big event for the prison authority and Major Yung because we had an order from Prime Minister Fang Man Dong, to buy a couple of very big, those vases.

RV: Urns?

NXP: Urns there, for the Prime Minister’s office in Hanoi and then we also had the Bac My hospital and various ministries and so the poor commanding officer of the camp Major Yung, he said, “Phong, how much should I charge for those things, we cannot give them away.” They didn’t give anything away. So, I said well, how much would it cost outside, whatever the price outside, you just charge it. He said, “that’s a very high price,” I said, “okay, go to the market price” and we were able to sell at those rates, nobody questioned the prices because big shots just pay. Then we were able to make an income.

RV: Who kept the money?

NXP: The camp of course.

RV: The camp, it went to a camp kitty.

NXP: But then the camp kitty, but then I and the guys who produced and manufactured those articles of art, we were given a monthly allowance, that is, I would say it was fifteen dongs I think.

RV: Fifteen?

NXP: Dongs.

RV: Fifteen dong?
NXP: Yes, and at that time the average salary of a middle-level civil servant would be about fifty dongs.

RV: Fifty, so you were making fifteen a month?

NXP: So, fifteen you see, not bad at all.

RV: No, not bad for a prisoner.

NXP: Yes, but those things sold for hundreds of dongs.

RV: Have you ever thought about trying to find those pieces of art after you left the camp?

NXP: I have never returned to the camp but I doubt very much that you could.

RV: But in Hanoi or the places where you sold them?

NXP: Yes, personally that did not appeal to me to return anyway, so that was about the construction of the camp but for the first year we didn’t do anything. It was only in the second year that we began to work and labor teams were formed. It was a big encouragement some way because we were told that the labor camps were different from real prison and as you knew we were in prison there and I think with the camps in South Vietnam we were, I mean truthfully, you must say that we are about two hundred thousand of former officials and officers of the former Saigon regime. We will really officially in re-education camp, I would say about two hundred thousand and were kept there, legally you would call it administrative confinement. We were not tried in any court, we were not informed of anything, we were just kept there. I also remember that during the war with the Saigon government we also had that administrative measure against a number of suspects and people that we considered were the enemy.

RV: So you would do the same thing?

NXP: So, we then received the same treatment anyway. So, we were waiting to be told what would happen to use, but were never told.

RV: Did you have a problem with that, because you had spent so much time in the west, in Paris, in France and then in London you spent so much time and then having faced a situation where you had no legal recourse at all, no trial, no explanation, no judge.

NXP: No communication.

RV: No communication, how did you feel about that?
NXP: Well, it was very strange for me. I did not question the legality of anything in that respect. I was just very eager to be told what would happen to us, that’s all, whether we would be tried, we would have to do ten years or twenty years, anything, instead of not being told anything at all. So I was mainly concerned with being told, whatever it might be, but to be told, that’s all. Then the greatest worry was the fate and what happened to the people at home, my parents and all the members of the family. These were the two main things that bothered me really, but I did not really try to say well, I would be harshly punished or not, I would be treated well or not, that did not really worry me but I was really eager to be told.

RV: Were you ever told anything?

NXP: Never, and they never done that with anybody, even after the four years, that is by 1979 there were the very first isolated cases of release, those special cases of release.

RV: From your prison?

NXP: From my camp yes, from my prison. And then in 1980 you had more, more and then afterwards you had big groups being released.

RV: Did you ever ask anyone, Major Yung, tell me what’s happening and how long will we be here?

NXP: No, I didn’t ask him because I couldn’t bring myself to ask and so I just wait for them to tell.

RV: Was that a pride thing?

NXP: I think so. I wouldn’t like to let them see how I feel and we were never told on which criteria, for what reasons they made those releases and it was such a mixture that you can never guess any kind of criteria.

RV: No pattern?

NXP: No pattern whatsoever. I think it was done on purpose so that nobody can claim, “I meet the requirements.” And we had the old, the young, the military, the civilians, the high-ranking, low ranking, and all kinds of things.

RV: What do you think now, why were people released, looking back at it, what were the criteria now?
NXP: I think there was a need to release after four or five years. It was big pressure on the part of the international community, I think the U.S. also keep on trying to get all those people in re-education out. And also probably the Hanoi authorities found out by that time that we would not be in position to do anything really drastic or harsh, to the regime. So, they began to release I would say cases which was present too much of a problem. I don’t know why I happened to be among the first ones and probably thanks to my confession of thirty-seven pages, instead of the hundreds of thousands of pages of other inmates, I said well, what I did was at the negotiating table and probably Mr. Le Duc Tho and Mr. Sun Ti and Madame Binh would know much more than I do what happened in negotiations, so that was the only thing I could report.

RV: Have you ever, do you know what happened to those thirty-seven pages, did you ever see them again?

NXP: No, never but I also had a visit from a vice minister of the interior, rather relatively old guy, he must be in his late ’60s or something, he was probably one of the heroes during the French colonial period. He also experienced prison during the French colonial period and he was a kind of Major General, Vice Minister of the Interior for Security. He came with two young guys one Sunday and told me that about eighteen, exactly eighteen of my high ranking relatives in the Hanoi government petitioned and vouched to have me released in their custody. So the big shot came down just to inform me, laughingly, that there were eighteen of my relatives, three-star Generals, Party Secretary and things like Vice Minister in the Hanoi government vouching for me but “regretfully the government and the Party count not release you, yet.” So, I also could have jumped back as you can see I was very skinny by that time already that I dropped from nearly a hundred and sixty pounds to about ninety pounds by that time and I said to him, “I don’t weigh much, how come that I much heavier than the eighteen high-ranking officials of your regime,” with big laugh there. But that was the time when I began the kind of relationship with the vice minister of the Interior and the through him later on to another general who was responsible for all the prisoners of the country. And he was very, his hobby was gardening and all those kinds of pots and vases and urns that you put in the gardens, so when he heard that we were making it, producing it and the Prime Minister’s office had it and other ministers, he went down and visited me, usually on
Sundays to discuss about things. So I tried to run him ancient Greece architecture to ancient Rome architecture and informed him of all kinds of vases that hey had in those days. Of course he was very conservative in his artistic outlook and eventually I brought him to very modern shapes. Then he came very often and he even tried to bring me some food, fresh fish.

RV: Sneak it in, or just openly?

NXP: Yes, no just openly. He gave me two or three fish, probably he, the troops, his soldiers fishing somewhere, anyway, and then.

RV: Let me interrupt just a second to change the disk, we’re almost out of time here.

NXP: Oh, we stop a few minutes.

RV: Okay, we’re starting a new disk, go ahead.

NXP: Sp, that General who was the head director of all what they call the re-education department of the ministry of the interior, he came very often on Sundays to discuss Arts with me and each time he brought two to three fish and things like that, a piece of meat to give me because it was very rare to have meat and fish.

RV: Would you share with the others, or would you go ahead and eat that yourself?

NXP: Because we have a group of ten for our meals, we were divided in-group of then so we eat together so I put in whatever I got for the ten. And it was he who by November 1979, it was about the end of the four years, he passed a few hints, he passed to me a few hints, he asked me, “Phong, what would you do after your release?” I said, “well, I don’t really know. I probably first of all have to go back to my old parents.’ They were by themselves, no one to take care of them. I was very worried about my old parents. He said, “well if you were released would you continue to remain in Vietnam or would you prefer to go abroad, return to France” because I had a family in France too. And I said, “well, it depends on the government and the Party to decide what I would be allowed to do and then I will see. But I have also my obligations with my very old aged father and mother in Saigon. I am very worried about them.” So he kept on like that, one Sunday after another and it was then by that time the beginning of December, 1979. Then one day I was called into the phone together with about eight or nine others, I
remember our group were about eight or nine and we were told that we would be released and they would try very much to get us back by Christmas to allow us to enjoy Christmas and New Year, that was by the end of 1979, but they could not find the guards to escort us back to Saigon, because that was the practice that each group of prisoners when they are released and sent back home to Saigon, a guard of the camp would go there and accompany us until we arrived in Saigon and reported to police there. So, for my release they did not have any guards and Major Yung called all of us, the eight or nine that we were allowed to go home then, said, “Well, Phong you would be the head of the delegation and take them back to Saigon.” He play on the words of gone, but hit was really great anxiety in the first or second years of imprisonment there because we found out in the camp there, Camp A-15, there were also common criminals, separate in a section in the barracks and there were also another group, about fifteen of them who were the former Saigon commandos, flown airborne over North Vietnam for sabotage missions during the time of President Diem and the one with the longest internment there among the fifteen were in his eighteenth year, but they were very shall we say united together, that group of fifteen. They didn’t speak much to others outside, they kept to themselves.

RV: Did you have much contact with them?

NXP: Not much. We had hellos and things like that because they did not mix with the rest and they were separate. They did their work, they were in the woodwork section, carpenters, they did that for years. But I must mention that in addition to those former Saigon commandos we had also the common criminals and there were very two interesting cases, funny cases too. There was a very young guy who was probably twenty years old, skinny, tiny chap and very dark skin and he was the only survivor in the whole family. He had five brothers and his father together with the other four brothers were shall we say, “heroes of the revolution,” they fought and they died during the war.

RV: Against France or against?

NXP: His father was during the French period and his brothers were during the American period. Of course he was considered a very exceptional case of what they called the hero of the revolution and his mother was also the head of the women’s association, revolutionary women association in Hanoi, of the Hai Ba Trung district, which is the very central district of Hanoi. And what happened to that young chap when
he was still in his teens, I think about seventeen or eighteen, he was walking around the
lake in Hanoi with his girlfriend and there were three or four guys trying to make a pass
at his girlfriend.

RV: Around Hoan Kien Lake?

NXP: Yes, the Hoan Kien Lake and the Golden Salt Lake, and the diligent chap, member of the family of heroes highly respected, he just knived one of those four guys to death, but considering his family and also a kind of minor, not adult yet, so he was sent to youth re-education center but he was so bad that they put him in our prison and he was there with the common criminals. But that guy was really Houdini, you know reincarnated because he managed to escape jail several times, through the roof and then jump outside, without being detected. The next morning of course on each of his evasion and escape from the prison there Major Yung just laughed and said, “Well, in a few days he will be back here” and very often his mother took him back.

RV: Really, why?

NXP: Because he would go home to be with his mother and she would convince him that you have to return to jail because you have to be in jail. And he had rather preferential treatment, but that’s one case which was rather funny. Nobody really worried when he escaped.

RV: Would his mother walk him back to the jail?

NXP: Yes, but then in the end, the final part of his story, when I was still there at the camp he escaped but he didn’t return and then he didn’t go back to his mother who was a very high-ranking official in the head, chair person of the women’s association. We learned later on that he went to Da Nang and joined the hooligans there and disappeared in the wilderness, so that was the case of that little guy. But there was also another very interesting case, the daughter of an Army Colonel, also hero of the revolution and she was a really wild seen in Hanoi and did bad things there, that eventually the father had to put her in jail there and she was there responsible for the administrative things in the office. Then she began to get hold of the young guards there.

RV: How old was she?

NXP: Oh, she was about nineteen and she had then two lovers. One was the guard responsible for the kitchen and the other one was the one responsible for the
blacksmith section of the jail, really big guy, a blacksmith type really, so everybody knew that these two were her lovers. Then one day she had the bright idea to steal the things which belonged to the inmates because when you get into jail you have to surrender your rings, your watches and your wallets and everything, your money and they put it in two big cupboards in the office. So she managed to take a number of those things, the packages and the back, so in front still there but it became emptier and emptier each day and it was then eventually discovered. But what happened was she convinced her boyfriend in the kitchen to bury most of the watches and rings in a small wall where they raised the pigs, just behind the kitchen and together with the blacksmith they began to enjoy the results of her robbery.

RV: This is near the kitchen though.

NXP: Yes, and so with the blacksmith she passed on the watches and so on to be sold in Hanoi, so usually during the weekend they would go out to Hanoi, it was not very far from our camp, thirty miles and it was detected in Hanoi by the police eventually that it was supplied by the blacksmith in the camp and so it was discovered eventually and the three were arrested and were taken away to another prisoner, so that the case of the daughter of the colonel.

RV: Interesting, so she was able to leave the camp and travel to Hanoi at the weekends, if she wanted to?

NXP: Oh, yes they were free to go and they did that for fun. It was not very far from the capitol city.

RV: You don’t know what happened to her?

NXP: No, we didn’t hear anything but they were convicted and caught and so they had their sentences. So that was for the inmates there. Of course the labor teams were set up we had all kinds of activities and right at the beginning I was not with the mason group yet, but for just a few days only I was with the, what they call the agricultural, the vegetable group and then I was put on the building I think. But there were those labor teams and those who work in the fields would go out of the prison and stay there the whole day, return only in the evening before five PM and they would carry they’re so-called lunch with them when they work out in the field. The others, inside the camp that would have their lunch in the camp.
RV: What kind of clothing were you issued?

NXP: Oh, we had a uniform, kind of pajamas of course but all blue, not very dark blue but a kind of blue and we were given two set of pajamas a year, one straw hat and kind of a sandals made out of the ties so that’s what we had. One blanket, one mosquito net, straw mat, that was it. But we had legally, our share of toothpaste, sugar, what else, sugar, toothpaste and salt every quarter. Even the villagers outside didn’t have that, the guards didn’t have that but through the law by the re-education regulations the Ministry of Interior provide us with those things. Most of us just sold those things to the villagers to buy other things, to buy food, to buy cakes and things like that.

RV: What kind of contact did you have with the villagers?

NXP: Through the guards rather, through the guards and then they would say they would like to buy the soap, the toothpaste things like that, to pass through the guards and get the money, in exchange we would get the so-called cakes, the kind of noodle cake in the north. They do it the whole year long, not only during the moon cakes season only. They were very hard, but it was better than nothing.

RV: Did you pay the guards a little bit of money to be the middleman?

NXP: No, it was so little money it would be with the press emblem, nothing at all.

RV: How did you get on with the guards?

NXP: I got on very well; they were very courteous to me. They were from the other sections, where they have rough times with the guards, but not in our, the only brick cell, building. The guards there probably were chosen among the better ones to be courteous and relatively speaking of a much higher education and culture compared to the other guards.

RV: Did they know who you were, your stature in the former Saigon government.

NXP: Vaguely.

RV: Vaguely?

NXP: Vaguely.

RV: Your visits with this who would visit you on Sundays, did you, how did you feel about that, were you welcome to, or open to this process or did you feel any kind of resentment towards the fact that?
NXP: The old guy was very open, the one who went through the French war. He was very open but the two young ones were really tough. Even at one time I had the impression that they were going to beat me up if there were no old guy there.

RV: Why?

NXP: Well, they were really antagonistic to the prisoners and jury spigot; probably they had reasons to, had a big grudge against me or us, the former Saigon regime people. But the old man was rather friendly and I made quite an impression than eventually on the two young guys too because one Sunday I think almost a couple of years after our arrival there, they came down one Sunday and asked me to sign some papers, so I said, “what kind of papers?” They said, “well the papers to release the Be Nac Carrols in Paris, which belonged to the Saigon delegation. I was the one to sign that for the bank and it was probably about two millions dollars or something which was still in the bank and that was it. [mumbling]. And they were really tense that Sunday morning when they came down to us because they expected me to refuse to sign. Well, they expected me to say this is the people’s money, it’s not my own money and then it belongs to the government, whichever of Vietnam. The old one that the bank insists that they must have my signature to release the funds to anyone, so accept the release now to the government of Vietnam they would do it, but without my signature they wouldn’t do it. Of course the Hanoi government claimed to the French government that all those accounts belonged to them but then I think the bank played a game with them, said that account was for the delegation of the Republic of Vietnam but it was under the authorization of Mr. Nguyen Xuan Phong and so we needed the agreement of Nguyen Xuan Phong to release that funding to anybody according to his instructions, unless he’s no longer alive, but if no proof of his death is provided to the bank then we need his signature. I signed right away the thing and they were very surprised. I didn’t put any condition, I didn’t ask for my release or anything, that’s all, that is the people’s money.

RV: How long into your internment did this happen?

NXP: Well, I’d say probably about two years after, so it was right in the middle, a little bit more.

RV: Did you have any thoughts of putting up a condition?
NXP: Bargaining, yes I did. But in the end I thought that it would be a good thing to do, or that it would not reflect really what I am. So, there was no reason for me to refuse.

RV: I’m sure that made an impression.

NXP: And some of the friends I had in my cell, particularly the vice minister of information is a very nice chap, much younger, he said that you should not have given the thing so easily, you could have asked for something in return, special treatment, house arrest or something of that kind instead of prison. I said that I thought of it but I don’t think that it’s worth claiming that but I also said that it would be a bit unfair for the rest, I would prefer to share the whole common lot than trying to play anything by myself.

RV: Did they treat you differently after this?

NXP: No, I think they didn’t inform anybody and later on I was informed that the bank in Paris released the money to the government.

RV: How did you feel about that?

NXP: Nothing.

RV: Nothing?

NXP: Nothing at all. I wouldn’t be interested in money anyway.

RV: How did the guards address you, was it Mr. Phong, Ambassador Phong or Bong Phong?

NXP: No, An Phong.

RV: An.

NXP: Yes, brother.

RV: But you were older than them right?

NXP: Not much, not much. There were really old guys there. The older inmates there did not fare very well. Most of them, for most of them it was the first contact with the cold weather, they never had anything there and many of them didn't even go to Da Lat to know the cold in South Vietnam and most of them passed away, they could not, because of the lack of food, there was no clothing of course, we had only those two pajamas and whatever we had with us at that time and they could not deal with the cold weather there and it was really cold because it was in the wintertime, 0 C, centigrade.

RV: Wow, how did you stay warm, blanket and pajamas and that’s it.
NXP: Yes, and whatever you could lay your hands on, cardboard, newspaper, just wrap yourself with all these things. I managed to, I had the habit of using lots towels, bath towel, so when I went to re-education I brought several big towels with me, that help a lot. I cut into socks and gloves and vests so that helped me a lot, but the others didn’t have any of these things. It was only in the fourth year they began to receive, clothing and that sort of thing. That’s also something, rather remarkable because when we began to receive those parcels from our family the people in the guard stand were really flabbergasted to see so much wealth in a package, medicines, of course really not, all kinds of things in there, clothing and I work out the value of those packages that we, the inmates, each of us received, it as in the average the wealth, value which would be equivalent to about five to ten years salary of a civil servant in North Vietnam.

RV: So it was real, they couldn’t imagine where this money?

NXP: Yes, they couldn’t imagine so much wealth from the south coming up there, especially the medicines were very rare, having medicine.

RV: Did you share with this, did people share their packages and medicine?

NXP: Well, I think the general attitude was that you try to cling on to the most vital things you need but we shared, we shared very readily. In fact thanks to that many of the inmates survived, because some of them didn’t have very much and some did have a lot, the rich ones.

RV: Did they address the older prisoners as Anu?

NXP: No, Ol Han.

RV: Ol Han, did that bother them?

NXP: No, not at all. We were in prison so we accept those things, that was the practice among the Communists as always.

RV: Okay, everybody was brother.

NXP: They did not give us the comrade appellation but they would do that among themselves, Don Chi, that means comrade, even in Russia they do that too.

RV: What kind of medicines did you have, what kind of healthcare did they provide for you?

NXP: Nothing at all and there was a kind of infirmary, a health station, which was put in the hands of an inmate, but a common criminal, a doctor and he was the director of
a state hospital, I think in Haiphong, I think and he got eighteen years for shooting his
wife and her lover in bed and when we arrived there he became quite close friend of
mine. He was in his fifteenth year of his eighteen-year verdict.

RV: He knew he had eighteen years?
NXP: Oh, yes he was.
RV: He was told.
NXP: He was tried in court, a very nice guy, a very peaceful guy. He was
supposed to be responsible for the health station, the infirmary there, without anything at
all.

RV: He was peaceful despite the fact that he had murdered two people?
NXP: Oh, yes. He'd been there for fifteen years already.
RV: He had time to cool down.
NXP: Yes, time to cool down very much. I think that he wouldn’t be better off
outside, or inside, for him it would be the same life I suppose. He was allowed to have a
separate accommodation along the barracks of the guards, he was given room there, so
special treatment and he was considered to be a doctor and together with the doctors from
Saigon, the inmates who came we also had the director of the Pasteur Institute in Saigon,
Dr. Ei, very good doctor and they tried to take care of us there. And in fact I had an
accident at one time there, broke two ribs, still have now, they have not healed and it was
broken, there was no medical care whatsoever and the two ribs, the last two ribs down
here healed in the wrong way, like this, so now many of the doctors said it can be
remedied very easily, you just open it again, break it again and put it, and I said no, I
keep it as a souvenir, but the doctor was.

RV: Does it cause you pain now?
NXP: Yes, now and then, yes, internal wound. I can feel it now, they are like this.
RV: Okay, for the record you’re holding hands at I guess about a forty-five degree
angle and they’re broken pointing upward.
NXP: That is the two ends did not frame again. And that doctor, the former
director of the hospital in Haiphong, he said. “Phong, I have to, I have hidden some
morphine for myself but I know the broken ribs hurt a lot, so I will give you the only
morphine that I have on me right now.” And he gave me that thing to lessen the pain.
RV: Was it an injection?

NXP: Yes, an injection and we found some cloth and he gave me a bandage there and he said there’s nothing else that we could do, there was nothing else we could do, just wait for it to heal by itself. I was bedridden so to say for two weeks because it was very difficult for me to move at all, very painful. The guards who hid the whole incident, each day when we line up to go to our work, they would carry me to the upper bunk to be out of sight and let me lie there by myself the whole day, for two weeks like that and it was not reported because the guard was afraid to be punished for letting the accident happen.

RV: What happened?

NXP: Well, it was during a work session and the kind of metal structure that they had in the workshop collapsed and it fell on me. I was under those metallic bars.

RV: Is it like scaffolding?

NXP: Yes, to hold things that they put it up there, but the Army type things, but I was almost all right under the fallen metallic bars there, but then one of the young guards came and he saw me under the thing and probably thought he had the good idea to probably push away those metallic bars lying on top of me. So with his military boots, he kicked those bars, but then he kicked me rather than the bars and broke my two ribs. They carted me out.

RV: What did you say, what did you do?

NXP: I said, you kick and broke my ribs, he broke completely two ribs and then.

RV: This is on your right side?

NXP: Yes, here now you can feel here I suppose.

RV: Oh, yes I can feel it, yes, wow.

NXP: It was very painful.

RV: I can imagine.

NXP: So that was the incident so we didn’t make a big fuss because some of other inmates said we had to report to Major Yung and I said, “No, if you do that he will get into trouble and we have more trouble.” And that was okay we can overcome the problem by ourselves.

RV: So he agreed to help you and you agreed to not say anything and the other inmates.
NXP: Yes, nobody said anything, other than they didn’t say anything and that
doctor then tried to get me some help with that from of morphine injection, that was it.
There was no medicine, nothing of any kind.

RV: Did Major Yung ever find out, did he ever find out about your ribs?
NXP: Oh, yes he found out later of course.
RV: What did he do?
NXP: He came and said to me that I should have reported to him, could have
given a little more medical care for that I reported it, two broken ribs. But there was also
other very funny incident. I was in the cell with a guy by the name of Le Won Trieu and
he was at that time in the same government, the last government of the RVN he was the
finance minister and he was also my neighbor in Saigon for years. We met for the first
time when we were in Paris doing our schooling there and he was at one time the
director-general of all the taxation so everybody was after him and he ended up as the
minister of finance. He had a very unusual problem, that I think was about the third year.
He got his testicles swollen, big like a grapefruit.

RV: Both of them?
NXP: Both of them, each one big like a grapefruit so the two would be in all this
volume. He could hardly walk, he could hardly even lie down or sit or anything.
RV: Why did this happen?
NXP: And then we took him to the director of the Pasteur Institute Dr. Ei and to
that doctor, the former director of the Haiphong hospital and our Saigon doctor, who was
the director of the Pasteur Institute, he said; “Well, Trieu this can be cured very easily if
you have some meat or fish or shrimp, lobsters to eat.” And Trieu was so angry because
you wouldn’t ever have those things in jail, he wanted to jump on and beat the doctor up
to say such a stupid thing. But then luckily for him I think it was in the third year as I
said that we began to receive those packages and then of course there was no medicine
whatsoever in the camp, but it was caused by lack of food and he received his package
from his family and then the very first thing that he did, that former finance minister was
to take a whole can of condensed milk, make two holes in it and then began to suck the
whole can of condensed milk, imagine that. He empty it in almost one blow, that helped
his testicles but the guy got into a diarrhea for days. But that was the beginning of the

good days, when we receive our things.

RV: That was what four years?

NXP: It was about the end of the third year that we began to get packages and the

visits.

RV: Well, what happened to his testicles, were they ever back to normal?

NXP: Yes, they resolved to normal.

RV: How are you doing, shall we stop for today?

NXP: Yes, okay.

RV: Okay, thank you sir.