

Foreword:

"Letters from South Korea" was a 15-year long series of moving stories carried in the monthly magazine, "Sekai," from the May issue of 1973 to the March issue of 1988. These articles told the world about the Korean politicians, religious persons, writers, and journalists, students and workers who stood up against their nation's military regime in pursuit of restoring democracy. The letters were written by a certain "T. K." This underground correspondence was organized by a Christian group in Korea, and "T. K." in Tokyo at that time, compiled the documents together with others and wrote the letter. Last year, in 2003, the Christian group in Korea held a press conference and disclosed the whole story of the underground project. "T. K." was identified as Dr. Chi yung-gwan.

"Letters from South Korea" was a great achievement for Korea's democratization movement, and at the same time, it was a product of unprecedented solidarity between the Christians of Japan and of Korea. The whole scope of the project needs to be re-appropriated in light of the church history of these two countries. It also was the product of a global ecumenical Christian network since so many people, including missionaries and individuals from Europe and North America, were involved and committed to the project.

We are very happy to present the translation of the interview article with Dr. Chi Myung-gwan, which was carried by "Sekai" in September 2003. The interview coincides with the rise in Japan of a dangerous new style of nationalism. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi had promised, before the general election held last year, that the LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) will have its draft proposal for amending the Constitution ready in two years. It is Article 9, the "war denouncing clause," that bears the most upon the future course of Japan. As democratization in Korea becomes more mature, this might be a time for Japanese Christians to ask our Korean friends for support of "democratization" in Japan. We are standing at the crossroads with two choices: will we choose life and create a culture of lasting peace, or will we choose the road of destruction and spread a chain of violence and war? We fervently hope for the former, working towards peace and reconciliation.

We wish to express our deep appreciation to Dr. Chi Myung-gwan and Mr. Okamoto Atsushi, Editor-in-Chief of "Sekai," for giving us permission to translate the interview. It was translated into English by Mr. Kusunoki Toshiaki. We also express our sincere gratitude to Ms. Kathryn Treece and Rev. Claudia Genung-Yamamoto for proofreading. Special thanks also go to Mr. Oh Jae-Shik for the final proofreading and for corrections of various technical terms and Korean names.

Toshimasa Yamamoto (Rev.)
General Secretary, NCC-Japan
April 1, 2004

"Letters from South Korea"

~ An International Joint Project That Worked ~

Okamoto Atsushi [Chief Editor]: A tense and serious atmosphere continues to prevail over the Korean Peninsula today, especially with regard to North Korea. Some 20 or 30 years ago (in the 70s and 80s), it was South Korea that drew more of the world's attention. The military regime there with dictatorial power was bent on suppressing not only opposition parties, labor unions and student movements, but also those individuals who demanded democratization of the country, such as journalists, writers and religious men and women. Oppressive measures often ended with bloodshed.

During the 70s, I was in college, and that's when a series of incidents took place one after another. In 1973, for instance, Mr. Kim Dae-jung, an opposition leader in exile in Japan then, was abducted from a Tokyo hotel in broad daylight, and a poet, Mr. Kim Chi-ha, was given the death penalty for publishing a statement critical of the regime. That's the time when I began to pay more attention to our neighbor country, South Korea.

It was during that time that I came across *Sekai (The World)*. The series titled "Letters from South Korea by T.K.", starting in 1973, created an especially great influence on me. Since many friends were also ardent readers of the series, the feature played the role of forming a common understanding of the times among us.

It was due to the "*Letters*" that I began to develop a reverence for, or a very strong respect towards, the bravery and action demonstrated by those Korean people who, risking their lives, put up resistance and kept on speaking out against cruel oppression. It was because the "*Letters*" carried words that were powerful enough to shake our hearts and minds. And it certainly influenced the Japanese of that time towards a better understanding of South Korea.

A man from an embassy of a certain country in Europe lately took the trouble to visit me, and told me that his embassy in South Korea used to get hold of *Sekai* in the 70s and 80s, and read the "*Letters*" in translation. "Otherwise, we had no way to measure what was happening in Korea even though we were stationed right there," he told me. With great respect for *Sekai*, he came and visited me that day. This incident shows that the influence of the "*Letters*" was beyond Japan and South Korea.

The database of *Sekai* lists your name in 1990 for the first time. After that, your name appears quite often in interviews, dialogues and other articles. The truth, however, is that you had a deep involvement with the life of *Sekai* since the 70s with your real name undisclosed. You played a crucial role in the making of the "*Letters from South Korea by T.K.*". I'd like to ask questions today mainly in that respect.

Now, while in Korea, you took a stand against the Treaty between Japan and Korea. When was it that you came over to Japan as if seeking asylum?

Church Was the Last Fortress

Chi Myung-gwan: ... towards the end of October of 1972. Under the Yushin constitution, the martial law was declared on October 17th, and I came to Japan right after that. When I secured my passport, the country was already under the Yushin system. At the airport I found the military personnel checking everything, which made me think that I wouldn't be able to embark at all. That's how I left Korea.

The Japanese government, I suspect, didn't want to let me in, perhaps, disliking me for some reason. My visa application to Japan was neglected for over half a year. The number of visitors from Korea to Japan was not so large at that time, but I must have been a persona non grata in the eyes of the Japanese government since I openly stood against the Treaty between Japan and Korea. So I solicited help from the people of a newspaper company and others, and the visa was finally granted, quite unwillingly on the part of the Japanese government.

In 1967 I had gone to the U.S. to study, and on my way back home from there in November of 1968, I stopped over in Japan and stayed for nearly one month.

I reflected on many subjects then. One of them was that I needed to study more. In the midst of the tough and rough circumstances of Korea in the 60s, I had no time to deepen my studies, because I was writing things and making speeches everyday on one hand, and I was trying to run away from the intervention by the KCIA (Korean Central Intelligence Agency, presently, National Intelligence Service) and other government agencies on the other. Having a break in the States, studying for nearly one year there, I sincerely realized that I had to do more studying. If another chance were given, I thought, I'd rather come to Japan, not the States.

My very first time in Japan was actually in December of 1965, when I was asked to write about the history of churches in Korea for the monthly magazine, *Fukuin to Sekai (The Gospel and World)* out of Shinkyō-shuppansha Publishing Company. "Eighty Years of History of Korean Churches" was published in 1966. During those days of preparing the paper I also came to realize that we in Korea needed to establish viable relations with Japan.

Coming to Japan again in 1972 as a research fellow at Tokyo University, I was determined to devote myself to studying. But, before long, Mr. Oh Jae-shik (then, the Christian Conference of Asia: Urban Rural Mission <CCA-URM> secretary, presently in charge of North Korea program at the World Vision International) visited me and said, "This is not the time for you to be silent!" That's how my wheel of involvement got rolling all over again. In other words, that's when I made up my mind to get involved again in the democratization movement of Korea, employing guerrilla tactics from Japan, so to speak.

At Sophia University at that time, there was a Mr. Kim Yong-bock, who had

studied also at Princeton Theological Seminary. (Mr. Kim returned to Korea afterwards, became professor and later president of Hanil University and Theological Seminary in Jeonju, Korea. Presently, Chancellor of Asia Pacific Graduate School for the Study of Life.) Mr. Oh Jae-shik, Mr. Kim, myself, and Mr. Kang Moon-kyu who was also in Tokyo at that time (then, Asia Secretary of the World Student Christian Federation <WSCF>, and later became General Secretary of YMCA Korea. President of National Saemaul [New Village] Movement during the days of President Kim Dae-jung. Presently, Chairperson of Global Civic Sharing), so four of us altogether, sailed out the project, keeping close communications with our home churches.

In order to provide support to various Christian movements throughout Asia, Mr. Oh set up an office called the "Documentation Center for Action Groups in Asia - DAGA", where Mr. Kim Yong-bock whom I just mentioned, Rev. Pharis Harvey, an American Methodist missionary (later, Director of Center for Labor Issues and Movements in Washington, DC. Now retired), and a Japanese by the name of Mr. Kurata Masahiko (later joined the teaching staff of St. Andrew's Univ. [Momoyama Gakuin Daigaku]. Deceased.) began to work. Besides those three key persons, there at the URM/ DAGA office were Ms. **Mavis Hyndman** and Ms. Dawn Ross (presently, a staff member of the World Council of Churches <WCC>), both serving as missionaries from the Presbyterian Church of Canada to the Korean Christian Church in Japan, and a few Japanese women, as far as I can recollect now.

The church was the only group left in Korea at that time that could make a move at all as an organization as such. If any other organizations should make a move, even an inch, they would have been crushed, having been branded as "red". For the church to become vocal and active would be different, since the government could not denounce it as "red." To first mobilize churches in order to kick off a democratization movement was what we thought we would do.

Right before Mr. Kim Dae-jung was abducted in Tokyo, a message reached us in Tokyo from Rev. Kim Kwan-suk of the National Council of Churches of Korea (<NCC:Korea>; a national level council for Protestant churches in South Korea). In it he said that churches in Korea were trying to write up a statement so as to establish a philosophical crux for the democratization movement. He further said that we should also let him know our opinion. In reply, we conveyed to him the trends in overseas churches and an evaluation about the historical significance of the Christian resistance movements in Korea. At the same time, we raised a fund in the amount of 2,000 dollars to send to Seoul. Shortly after that, churches in Korea issued the "Theological Declaration of the Churches in Korea." It was the first eruption of the democratization movement among Korean churches, and has been known ever since as the "Theological Declaration of 1973."

In October, 1973, a demonstration broke out on the campus of Seoul University for the first time in two years. Under the Yushin system, the only organizations to have survived the climate and able to put up some action was the student movement and the church.

The democratization in Korea must be supported by the international community at large, and to accomplish that purpose, the world must be informed of what was

happening inside Korea as well as the thoughts of the democratization movement ... that's what we thought. We decided to make Tokyo the dispatch center for that job. In other words, various pieces of information coming out of Korea would be dispatched and disseminated throughout the world via Tokyo, and at the same time certain requests in support of the movement for democratic Korea would be sent out of Tokyo to every corner of the world.

At the World Council of Churches (<WCC>, an international council of Christian churches except Roman Catholic churches) in Geneva around that time, Mr. Park Sang-jung was working sent by the churches of Korea (staff of WCC-CWME. General Secretary for the CCA. Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Korean Scholarship Foundation for the Future Leaders, Co-representative of an NGO, People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy in Korea). We contacted him, and he in turn approached various bodies within the WCC.

As to the American scene, there was Mr. **Lim Sun-man**, a professor of religious sociology at Paterson University in New Jersey. Through the good offices of Rev. Rhee Syngman (presently, professor at The Union Theological Seminary, Virginia, USA), the professor made appeals to the NCCC:USA and churches of different denominations. Rev. Rhee was one of the secretaries at the headquarters of the Presbyterian Church, and later he served as moderator of NCCC:USA, the first Korean person in that capacity. Also, a man by the name of **Kim Jong-sun** played a very important role in the U.S. He is deceased now. Anyhow, he used to be a president at a certain high school back in Korea. Arguing that no sound education was possible under the military regime, he went to the States and started a printing business there. In later years he grew to be a strong supporter of Mr. Kim Dae-jung.

Moreover, in Canada was Rev. **Kim Jae-jung**, a Presbyterian minister and an elder in the theological circle in Korea, also the former president of the Theological University of Korea. Rev. **Lee San-cho**, an elder at the **Migrants' Church** in Canada, also served as moderator of the United Churches of Canada in later years. These two ministers mainly took the initiative of approaching churches in Canada.

In Japan, the "Emergency Christian Conference on Korean Problems" was organized with Rev. Nakajima Masaaki of NCC:J (consisted of six major Protestant denominations and eight Christian organizations. The Rev. also served as General Secretary of Kyodan <UCCJ>; died in 1996) as a core person. Rev. Shoji Tsutomu (later became General Secretary of NCC:J, now retired), Rev. Ohshio Seinosuke (presently, pastor at Machiya-Shinsei Church), Mr. Iijima Makoto (presently, teaching at a Jr. high school), Ms. Yamaguchi Akiko (now retired), Mr. Ohshima Tadasu (presently, works for a Tokyo Metropolitan Government office), just to name a few, were active members of the Emergency Conference. Rev. Lee In-ha (pastor at Kawasaki Church of the Korean Christian Church <KCC> in Japan. Used to be Moderator for the KCC as well as for NCC:J) played an active part with Korean residents in Japan as his activity base. Groups were also organized in Germany and Sweden as well, with Mr. **Lee Sam-yol** and **Karl Aksel** at the center, respectively.

In Geneva, 1975, all these action groups were incorporated into an international

forum for a democratic Korea. With Rev. **Kim Jae-jun** of Canada as moderator, the forum changed its name later to the **Democratic xxxx (民主同志会)** for A Democratic Korea. Building such a network became only possible owing a lot to the power and personal connections of Mr. Park Sang-jung in Geneva and Mr. Oh Jae-shik in Tokyo.

Well, the information from Korea, as to how it reached here, was all brought in by human hands without exception, because of the danger of mail being censored and the phones being tapped. The ones who can freely go in and out of the country arousing little suspicion were people like missionaries, so they would visit there and come back with documents and a variety of other materials. Many different tactics were tried. For example, bringing along pieces of papers in the form of cigarettes, or stuffed inside a doll, in order to pass the anticipated inspections by the authorities at the airport. One time, I hear, our attempt was nearly on the verge of being intercepted, so the intended materials then were all thrown away into a garbage can at the airport right before they were to be smuggled out. There were instances where Japanese pastors and Japanese American ministers were arrested at the airport, and detained for a few days as a result.

At some times we used military mailbags of the US Armed Forces, and at other times diplomatic mail as well.

The information brought in from Korea in these ways then needed to be prepared for dissemination to the whole world. In that regard, our understanding was that the top priority should be given to Japan, and I took up the job of consolidating the gathered information and writing up the final product in Japanese.

Meeting with Mr. Yasue

Okamoto: So, you assumed the role of an anchorman. It is clear now that the "*Letters from South Korea*" was carried out as an international joint action. The series appeared in *Sekai*, starting from the May issue of 1973.

Chi: Mr. Yasue Ryosuke, chief editor of *Sekai* at that time (later became president of Iwanami Shoten, Publishers. Died in 1998), was not a person who would interpret freedom of speech in a stereotypical manner. When circumstances are critical, how should free speech respond? Under critical conditions, in a depressing society, true freedom of speech cannot be attained unless abnormal means are employed. That's what he was thinking.

How should the magazine, *Sekai* be --- not only in a society where people can freely talk as in Japan but also with the depressing situation of Asia at that time? If Japan were where free speech was observed, then it should be developing a kind of a relief role in the Asian context. That's how Mr. Yasue understood freedom of speech. The one who strongly supported him was Mr. Midorikawa Toru, then president of Iwanami Shoten, Publishers, and the former chief editor of *Sekai*.

Since it was an underground correspondence under abnormal circumstances in Korea, top secrecy had to be maintained in everything we did. There would be

times when given information would be partially altered, or when unconfirmed rumors spread within Korea might be collected and printed. However, Mr. Yasue was firm that that is the unavoidable role which free speech is expected to play under abnormal situations.

In the beginning, Mr. Yasue misjudged me. It was in 1965, when I was the editor-in-chief for a magazine, the *Sasangge Monthly*, after being driven from a teaching post, that I first visited Japan, as I told you a little earlier. In fact it was at an invitation by a certain magazine publisher in Japan. The political stance of that magazine was close to the Japanese government or right wing forces, and precisely because of that, the people around *Sasangge Monthly* had gotten into a debate as to whether I and others should go to Japan. Mr. Jang Jun-ha (founder of the *Sasangge Monthly*. Through difficult years he later became a Parliament member, belonging to an opposition party. Died a mysterious death while climbing a mountain in 1975), insisted that we should go at least once on the grounds that we in Korea needed to think how our country should live under the system laid out by the Treaty between Korea and Japan. So, it was decided in the end that the invitation should be accepted, and three of us should be dispatched, accordingly.

For twenty years after WWII, I had not come in direct contact with the Japanese people. You may think it's too crude, but I had been thinking all these years that the Japanese must be utterly different from us Koreans, say, perhaps with horns sticking out of their head, or something like that! I had jumped to a conclusion of my own: They are evil! The moment we landed at Haneda Airport, however, we were all dumfounded: "Mmm, they have exactly the same looks as we do!" I even thought that we might be able to converse in Korean with each other.

I didn't get to meet Mr. Yasue at that time. It was in 1968 that I first met him in person. There were such reasons as follows.

The inviting magazine publisher asked me later to contribute a report of my Japan visit, which I did. What happened, however, was that they fabricated my draft just as they pleased and printed it to read, to the effect, "Although I was against the Korea-Japan talks while at home, I realized, having come to Japan, that I was wrong." I lodged a protest against the publisher, but in vain, as I heard not a word from them.

It so happened that Mr. Yasue found and read my report in that magazine. He also knew well about the *Sasangge Monthly*, of which I was part, as well as the role it played. Mr. **Song U-fui** recollects, who was studying at Tokyo University at that time, that he had been told by Mr. Yasue: "This man writes like this despite the good struggle he puts up in Korea." In other words, he was disappointed in me though he used to hold me in respect. Mr. **Song** explained to him that it was not the case. He also advised me, either on my way to or way back from the States, that I should meet Mr. Yasue by all means, and defend myself. So, in 1968, when he was a secretary to the Governor of Tokyo, I met him in person and explained. Then he got angry saying that it was a problem the Japanese caused, and that it was the Japanese who had committed a wrongdoing in this case. After that, he and I felt much closer to each other.

When I came to Japan again in 1972, I was determined not to meet Mr. Yasue. That was because I wanted to devote myself solely to studying, avoiding various folk as much as possible. I was resolved to deepen my study in the political history of Japan at the graduate school of Tokyo University. I was to do so from the viewpoint of "the intellectuals in the gloomy age".

Now, you have to believe in such a thing called 'coincidence' in the world. I remember it was on board a bus somewhere that I just ran into Mr. Yasue. He said, "Why is it that you don't come and see me?" So I replied, "Well, I'll do so." During the meeting that followed later, I told him a little about what was happening in Korea. After listening to me, he said, "Write what you just told me in a magazine." The first pages I wrote for *Sekai* were titled "The War in Vietnam and Korea," appearing in the March issue of 1973, with an alias "**Kim Jung-il**".

Okamoto: In the May issue of the same year, I find that name again, with an article "From Military Administration to Fascism".

Chi: It was a talk with Mr. Yasue. Using that same name, I wrote several articles for *Sekai* afterward, too. **Lee Dae-seng** is another alias I used to use.

I was sort of dragged into that kind of activity by Mr. Yasue. In selecting writers, he had quite a unique talent. Other than him, I do not know any journalists like that. I used to tell him, too, several times and directly, "I only wish we had even one journalist in Korea like you." He was a foresighted man, who knew what the problem was in our times. Given that, he knew also what type of writers were most appropriate. And, even when a writer of his choice did not have enough power to imagine or conceive things in that direction, he would persuade the writer, show the direction, and finally take him or her into writing it. That's how Mr. Yasue was.

At the time of this interview, he said, "Since Korea is in its dark state, one of the first things for your movement to be addressing is to tell the outside world as much as possible about the state your country is in, right?" From then on, special articles on the problems in Korea were featured repeatedly, with a sharp cutting edge.

He kept a rather pessimistic view when it came to the history of Japan or of the world. I, on the other hand, was more or less optimistic, having determined to bring democracy to Korea. He believed strongly that the world would fall apart if it stayed the way it was. In daily reality, however, he stood firm all the way in support of those who were struggling, just as I have mentioned. He was a man of tears, indeed. He would never infect other people, so to speak, with his own pessimism, though.

Okamoto: The "*Letters*" at first was not so lengthy nor a serial feature. It only appeared now and then. But from the time around the incident of the Kim Dae-jung abduction case (Aug., 1973), it became a series of its own.

Chi: That's correct. It was I that introduced Mr. Kim Dae-jung to Mr. Yasue. I told him that Mr. Kim was a such and such politician, and in turn I contacted Mr. Kim. The three of us met at Hamasaku, a Japanese restaurant in Ginza. Mr. Yasue walked in from the front door, while I entered from the back before he did. Mr.

Yasue showed a very keen interest in everything about Mr. Kim. I had to conduct myself in secret, never to come out on the surface, for my visa would be jeopardized otherwise. This was the only occasion, I believe, where I met Mr. Kim while in Japan until the time of his abduction.

Some years later, Mr. Kim asked me, through Mr. Yasue, to become the head officer of his movement. While conveying this message to me, Mr. Yasue did not fail to give me some admonishing advice, knowing my stance of daring to do everything in combating the military regime. He was of the opinion, he told me then, that intellectuals had better stay outside of political movements. Learning that Mr. Kim had been abducted later, I could not appreciate his advice more.

How the Information Was Taken Out and Brought In

Okamoto: A simple question: "T. K." signifies who or what?

Chi: No meaning attached to it at all! Mr. Yasue named it. Some used to speculate "T" might have something to do with my surname, and "K" might be from "Kwan". With no particular meaning given to it, Mr. Yasue came up with "T. K.".

Those who were sending us news and information from Korea were Rev. Kim Kwan-suk, then General Secretary of NCC:Korea (later, president of Christian Broadcasting System of Korea; president of the *Saenuri Weekly*. Deceased.), Rev. Park Hyung-kyu (presently, chairperson of the Board of Trustees of Korean Democracy Foundation), and the family members of those in prison. They constituted the main source of information in Korea. Rev. Kim Kwan-suk successfully defended NCC:K, and played a central role in every movement for democracy and for human rights in the country. Having commanded those on the front line of the movement, Rev. Park Hyung-kyu was put in prison five times. Rev. Kim Kwan-suk used to visit Tokyo on many different occasions and assumed an active part in coordinating the international network and the one in Japan built around Rev. Nakajima.

Okamoto: You mean, materials and information from all over Korea came into the hands of those you mentioned?

Chi: Correct. The individuals we sent from Japan to Korea would meet Rev. Kim and/or Rev. Park, and if there were statements that had been issued, their copies would be brought back to Japan. Or, those visitors would collect stories from different people, and if possible, try to meet those around them, too.

Okamoto: The "*Letters*", in terms of its contents, can be divided into several parts. One has to do with something you may call raw materials, such as the statements and pamphlets by the students, workers, and churches. Songs that were sung, poems recited are also introduced here. Another has to do with the original writing. It is a narrative portion, where it says a friend at such and such college said this and that, or a journalist said the following, etc. Were those stories collected upon interviewing?

Chi: Yes, that's right. The people not only from Christian churches but also from student movements were approached. There were occasions where they came to approach our people. Rev. Paul Schneiss, a missionary from the **Eastern Mission Board of Germany**, used to make a number of trips between Japan and Korea, and having aroused suspicion, he later became unable to enter there any longer. Besides him, a log of people of different nationalities, including Japanese, took turns to visit Korea: Rev. Pharis Harvey, David Satterwhite, a Quaker missionary, both from the US, Ms. **Hydman** and Ms. Ross from Canada.

Inside Korea, there was an organized network which facilitated for those visitors upon their entry to help meet a variety of people. It was comprised mainly of the staff member of the NCC. Rhee Kyoung-bae (Executive Director of Mescena Korea till July, 2003) and Yoon Su-Kyong (presently, Executive Director of Community Chest of Korea) did their job. Out of the Division of the Urban Industrial Mission (UIM) was a gang of three-Cho's: Cho Chi-song (retired and presently engaged in farming), Cho Hwa-soon (retired and presently engaged in a community development movement), and Cho Seung-Hyuk. Rev. Park Hyung-kyu had a metropolitan mission program with Kwon Ho-kyung (president of the Christian Broadcasting System till 2002; presently Executive Director of a community welfare center), Kim Dong-wan (General Secretary of NCC:Korea till 2002), and Son Hak-kyu (member of National Assembly till 2002, presently Governor of Kyunggi Province). And then, there was another 'gang of three' around NCC:K ministry: namely, Kim Sang-keun (later, General Secretary of Presbyterian Church in ROK, presently chair of the Board of Sky Life TV and President of Korea Transparency International), Lee Jae-jung (later, president of Anglican University, presently, member of National Assembly), and Oh Choong-il (later, Moderator of Korea Evangelical Church and NCC:Korea, presently, President of the *Labor Daily*). These were some known network groups which maintained steady contacts with visitors from Japan and other countries.

The visitors, not knowing it was I that was writing the "*Letters*", did their share of bringing out the materials. Being missionaries, many of them could meet with a wide range of people. Carrying just conventional conversations with them, and sometimes trying to find out specific information on certain matters, they collected stories. So-called rumors were often picked up, too, and therefore, wrong information was mixed in now and then as a result.

Here's an example. After the Kwangju incident, 1980, there was a rumor going around, saying, "... under torture while in prison, Kim Dae-jung confessed he was a communist." Mr. Yasue leaked that to a reporter from the *Asahi-shimbun*. That eventually caused the shut-down of the Seoul branch office of that newspaper, and its reporters stationed there were expelled.

In the face of an incident like that, however, Mr. Yasue never ever said, "Why do they convey to us such wrong information?" It was his conviction that things like that could not be avoided, given the abnormal circumstances Korea was under at that time.

I'm sure he must have seen various problematic features with the Korean people, but he would never bring them up, absolutely never. He completely defended

Koreans and resident Koreans in Japan at all costs. Even if they had flaws and shortcomings, it was Mr. Yasue's philosophy that he as a Japanese was in no position to touch upon such things. Sometimes I protested to him by saying, "Mr. Yasue, that's not realistic." He had his faith like that as part of his own view of life. He was absolutely firm on that. He believed that the Japanese were in no position to criticize or speak ill of the Koreans, and so he said absolutely nothing in this regard. To any Japanese person, in whatever capacity, who had criticisms against problems related to Koreans in Japan, or to the Peninsula, or the problematic situation in the North, Mr. Yasue kept on saying, "That's not right. The Japanese should not say things like that, the Japanese are in no ethical position to talk about that ..." That was his stance, and it was very, very clear. Throughout his life of speeches and writings, therefore, not even a word of criticism against Korean people can be spotted anywhere. Having said that, however, I don't claim that he never felt something was wrong in the Peninsula, while meeting with the people there in person himself.

Say, he visited the North, for example. Upon returning, he'd tell me how it was there. And, he used to say, "This and that was no good." So I'd tell him in response, "That's what is no good about the North." Then he'd agree with me, but never made such comments elsewhere, outside. That's how this man was. A Japanese, as he was, is not in a position to make such a comment ... having occupied the land and given such a tragic history to the people, what are the Japanese to say after all? ... is what was in his mind. Whatever the Koreans wanted must be fulfilled, and that's the duty of the Japanese people, he thought. Mr. Yasue was thoroughgoing in that regard.

I talk frankly about good things about Japan and its people as well as bad things, without scruple. In his case, no such talks were ever possible with regard to the Korean affairs, be it of the North or the South. To put it in an extreme expression, the Japanese is the one that's wrong in every respect relative to Korea/Koreans. That came from his ethical awareness. He doesn't mean the Koreans are that way as a fact. He was a man who would stick to his own principle all the way through.

How was he able to reach such a state of mind at all? Should I say he was a humanist from A to Z, 100%? That stance of his is reflected in the naming of the writer of the *"Letters"* as "T. K." What is written is more important than who writes it. Sure, I have been in a very particular situation of my own for years, really. I wondered this time, therefore, whether Mr. Yasue would let me go ahead on disclosing such things in such a way. My hesitation or qualms were there, precisely, for many, many years till today.

Okamoto: Yasue was asked several times by Mr. Kim Il-sung to come and visit the North. He used to send his thoughts and opinions there. When he did go there and met Kim Il-sung, he told me that he lined up criticisms right in front of the national leader.

Chi: It must have been words of criticisms for the benefit of the North. He would never, however, tell that to the Japanese in the form of a rumor or something like that.

Okamoto: His criticisms were strong and severe enough to make the people around Mr. Kim, or his cadre, stand up, with deadly pale faces. Coming back home, however, he never disclosed such things to anybody. He used to say that many visitors from Japan do exactly the opposite only to lose their trust.

Chi: He was a talker, and he wrote a lot, but he would never compromise on principles like that. It was he.

And then, he tried his best to meet with people of all walks, without making distinction as to who. However bad and wicked a man might be, he met him. Even with "important" people sent in by the KCIA of the time, he dared to meet, and tried to explain things to them (I cannot name them today because they are now very distinguished figures). At the same time he lent his ear to those people, too. He used to tell me also what those VIPs had to tell him and would make such comments as: "Well, they, too, seem to have a will to do something good and worthwhile." I didn't trust them that much, though! Anyway, he was a man who kept his gate of meeting wide open, and never rested upon fixed ideas of his own.

I was comforted by him all the time, yes, indeed. He himself held a fundamentally pessimistic view towards history, but yet he was a man giving comfort to others.

Prior to his visits to North Korea I used to press him every time by requesting him, "To the North, say this, do that." You may find in the *"Letters"* rather affirmative statements and comments to the North. Those were out of my wishes of wanting to move the North by so doing. Well, it's a product of naivete, you may say, to reflect at this point. Anyway, North Korea showed a very friendly, accepting attitude towards the *"Letters"*.

Those Who Went to Bat

Okamoto: Since the *"Letters"* had quite a following in Japan, while at the same time significantly influencing its society at large, the military government of Korea paid desperate efforts to track down the writer. In that regard, Yasue also was made a target of intimidation and harassment of all sorts. I was told about the KCIA agents staking out the Iwanami-shoten House. It's all amazing, come to think of it, that the things didn't leak out into the open for 16 long years. The drafts you wrote, for example, were all re-written by Yasue or someone he trusted at the secretarial section of Iwanami, because of the possibility of being traced down through the handwriting since it was the time when word-processors were not widely available yet. A spy being planted as a typesetter at the printing house was an anticipated possibility. The whole operation was backed up as carefully as that.

Chi: There, Mr. Yasue did a little bit of polishing up on my draft, too, revising the portions that might sound strange in Japanese, and also altering the style so that the original writer would not be exposed. The draft in my handwriting, I burned all of it. I had a whole bundle of letters from him at that time, and he instructed me to burn them all, which I did ... except I kept the last few letters I received intact as special souvenir items.

Okamoto: You people really strained your nerves. Apart from Yasue, no one in Iwanami, or even in the editorial section of *Sekai*, knew the identity of "T. K." Joining the editorial staff myself later, I didn't dare to ask about it, really.

Chi: Sure, yes. We were all strained.

When the materials arrived from Korea, I read them all with newspapers open beside me, and more often than not, I wrote up the draft at one sitting overnight. At times, it took me till the morning to finish.

Mr. Yasue tried more than a few times, you know, to resign from the post of the chief editor. But every time I begged him to stay on by saying, "No. You should be there as the chief for the future of Korea as well!"

Okamoto: The series of the "*Letters*" finished in 1988. The democratization struggle went on in Korea, and the direct election of the president was revived in the previous year, that is, the Yushin system came to end ... was that the kind of understanding, I wonder, in ending the series?

Chi: Yes, that's right. Afterwards, Mr. Yasue resigned from the post of the chief editor, and became the president of Iwanami in 1990. In a way, he lived his life with the "*Letters*". Whenever I had to call him up, I did so using public phones, for both of us feared the chance of being tapped.

The democratic camp in Korea that knew about the "*Letters*" operation -- most of them were with the church -- made great efforts to hide the knowledge. Some church people were picked up and had to face torture. Not one of them disclosed the secret, though.

Mr. **Sun-u Fui** of Cho-sun Ilbo, whom I mentioned earlier, had already gone back to Korea. He began to suspect the truth. I believe he thought it must be Chi who was writing it. His position was rather close to the government, but he gave only an obscure, ambiguous answer when the KCIA questioned him on this matter. "It's not by a single hand, but by many," saying something like that.

One day, perhaps sometime in the early 80s, I recall, he came to Tokyo to see me and said, "I want to drink with you tonight." So, somewhere in Ginza, or maybe it was in Shimbashi, we exchanged drinks till both of us got really dead drunk. "I know you are doing a no-no business," he says. So I answered, "Silly! Nonsense!" I didn't tell him a thing then, either, until we departed that night. He says, "You and I are in different boots, but I will never tell anybody what you're doing." And at the last minute that night, he pushed me out of the drinking room with the words: "You go your way!" He was the only man in Korea, other than those of our underground group, who knew well what was going on. Now, even a man like that, as he was, kept the whole truth to himself alone. To the contrary, he kept deceiving the powers-that-be. And he went around among his Japanese acquaintances, saying, "Please look after Mr. Chi since he won't be able to go back home."

He held a grudge against Mr. Yasue in that very regard, thinking "Why do you

make use of and take advantage of Mr. Chi that way?" Indeed, he never wanted to see Mr. Yasue. I owe him in getting to know Mr. Yasue in the first place. But he had different view: "Chi is the only son of his family, plus has his own family. Because I introduced him to Yasue, things afterwards turned out this way. What can I do, how can I compensate for this?" Right before his death, Sun-u tried to visit and meet with Mr. Yasue, which was in vain, for the editor-in-chief was in the midst of a meeting. So he left a letter behind, instead. Mr. Yasue regretted so much that he missed the last chance of meeting the man from Korea, who died a week later.

Since both Mr. Yasue and Sun-u were great figures, I tried some tricks (though my political situation was different from theirs) to bring those two closer again, without referring to the *"Letters"* nor talking about myself.

Perhaps because of this history, Mr. Yasue always felt some guilt about me. "I'm the one who made Chi unable to go home, and caused him to lead a lonely life separate from his family," is what was on his mind, and he faced me accordingly. I used to tell him, "No, no, that's not right. You've been helping me in many ways." He let me have my own way in whatever, and with absolutely no reserve he would talk to me.

At Tokyo Women's Christian University, only Mr. Ogawa Keiji knew what I was doing. There, he was a professor of philosophy, studying Barth, a Swiss theologian. Later he moved to the University of Tsukuba also as a philosophy teacher. Since the professor knew what I was doing at the time of Kim Dae-jung abduction, he took the trouble of working out a plan to get me into Tokyo Women's Christian Univ., telling me not to go back to Korea, because "If you did go home, you'll be certainly in trouble, big trouble!" My being able to join the teaching staff of that university was only possible simply because Mr. Ogawa was there at that particular time. That's how I got to be able to stay on in Japan. Otherwise, the visa wouldn't have been issued at all. It was he that helped me secure the visa.

Again, Mr. Ogawa was the only person at Tokyo Women's Christian University who knew about my involvement in the operation. And, knowing that well, he came to my defense all the way through. The university president at that time was an outstanding professor by the name of Mr. Harashima Akira. His given name, Akira, in Chinese characters, is taken from the fact that he was born on the Korean Peninsula. His father went to Korea as a government official during the early days of Japan's colonial rule. Being critical of the colonial policies, he came home to Japan. Over the meal table, according to Mr. Harashima, his father used to say that the Japanese were doing bad things on Korean soil. Because of such personal history, President Harashima kindly took great care of me. History is an odd thing, don't you think?

Okamoto: Did Professor Sumiya Mikio (scholar of labor-economics. After teaching at Tokyo University and Shinshu University, served president at Tokyo Women's Christian University. President of Japan Labor Association. President of Social Security Council. Died in 2003.) know from the beginning what you were doing?

Chi: He did. Knowing about it, he helped me to get enrolled in the graduate school of Tokyo University. As soon as he became the president of Tokyo Women's Christian University later, he promoted me to be a full-time lecturer to ensure my

legal status stable.

Before he died in February this year, I visited him in the hospital. He said to me, "You should write about what took place, by all means. You need to disclose it in history." So I answered, "No. It's a thing of the past. Since it's only such a small episode in history, why should I bother to write, for what use?" I was scolded quite a bit, and even reconsidered that I might really have to write about it someday.

Isn't it how history is? The ones who labored are to be forgotten in history. The fruit, the harvest would go to different people. We have worked; since we did what needed to be done in our time, I thought we should better be forgotten about. Mr. Yasue had the same idea.

In the beginning, the WCC covered my living expenses. Although I stayed at Tokyo Women's Christian University, it was meant only to guarantee my legal status, and not to give them any financial burden. The WCC was financially responsible. The CCA, churches in Germany and in the US chipped in a donation to the WCC in support of me.

From the time when Professor Sumiya assumed the president's post at Tokyo Women's Christian University in 1980, the university began gradually to provide me a salary. From 1987, when I officially became a full-timer there, all my expenses were covered by the university.

Okamoto: For the "*Letters*" as an international project, the fund was secured by the WCC and other organizations ...?

Chi: Yes. Submitting needed documents, the NCC of Korea asked the WCC to support me. Mr. Park Sang-jung whom I mentioned earlier and many others kindly negotiated with the WCC on this matter.

Democracy First, or Unification First?

Okamoto: The Park Chung-hee administration tried a number of times to bring the case to court, but gave up on the idea after all, because according to what Yasue told me, it feared the possibility of the contents of the "*Letters*" being confirmed by the court as the truth. As you said earlier, the "*Letters*" did carry, as it turned out, items which were not necessarily true since it collected rumors in the streets, too. Even so, however, it was undeniably true - history attests to it - that the people put up resistance and protests in various parts of the country. What do you say: that the military government did not know a thing about the structural network of the "*Letters*"? Or, that it simply kept silent, having come to find out that it was an operation out of churches ...

Chi: I believe they suspected us, for the KCIA used to follow me. I in turn took very cautious measures of my own, and used to deceive them.

Around the end of 70s, I think it was, there was this incident. I went into a coffee shop at Kagurazaka together with Mr. Morioka Iwao of Shinkyō Shuppansha who

fully supported me. It so happened that I had 100 thousand yen on me that day, which was for the purpose of a down-payment or something for my room rent. Now, while at the coffee shop, I kept the cash together with documents from Korea regarding Kim Chi-ha. When I came back to the table after making a phone call, I found both of them gone, disappeared from where I left them.

How to handle this case, whether to contact the police or not? Well, Mr. Morioka and I debated what to do. In order not to make the whole thing complicated, we decided finally to forget about the money completely; what's gone is gone, you know. A few days later, a KCIA agent at the Korean Embassy called me. He asked, "Can I see you a minute?" So I met him, and when I did, I stated before he said anything to me, "I lost money the other day, but I'm determined not to be doing anything about it, because it's my fault." Perhaps, that made him feel relieved. If things had grown into a complicated mess, they would have lost their stand in relation to what I was, I guess. There were cases where they opted to swallow the truth, instead.

Okamoto: The documents and materials you received ... what did you do with them after you had finished with them?

Chi: Everything I wrote was either sent to Mr. Yasue or burned. And, the original materials, statements and the like which I used for writing, were kept at the DAGA office of Mr. Oh Jae-shik. Mr. Schneiss kept the largest quantity of materials since he made the most trips to and from Korea. Mr. Oh and Mr. Schneiss made copies of the documents between them, and that's how they kept them. Materials reached Tokyo through a variety of channels and routes. As our people in Korea asked that the materials should be first sent to Tokyo, a lot of things were concentrated in Tokyo. All those materials, primary resources, were returned to Korea some two years ago, and now they are under the care of the **National Commission for History Compilation**.

When they get all sorted out, a history of those years may be written. People told me that I should be doing the job, but I leave it to the coming generation.

The student revolt in France, 1968, has been called "a revolution of parole," meaning a revolution by language. The case in Korea, I believe, was also a "revolution of parole." The role the "*Letters*" played, after all, was exactly that. It was translated in many languages and was circulated widely, including North Korea. Of course, the people in the South made the best of it. Although *Sekai* was on the top of the list of forbidden books in the South at that time, still it came into the country and many people read it.

For the benefit of the network and general readers in the English-speaking world, *Sekai* published an abridged English translation of the "*Letters*." It was done by Mr. David Swain, an American Methodist missionary who lived in Japan for many years (*Letters from South Korea by T. K.: IDOC/North America*).

Okamoto: You touched upon North Korea a little while ago. Now, I suppose, the North tried to take advantage of the "*Letters*", which is not surprising at all. The democratization movement in the South, on the other hand, might have held some distrust or wariness towards the North. Many people in the movement being

church-related, I suppose an anti-communist attitude must have been rather strong among them. What view did you have in relation to the North? Within the movement in the South, I understand there were arguments as to "democracy first, and unification later", or "unification first and democracy later."

Chi: In the student movement, the opinion of "unification first" prevailed. The student movement believed we had to encounter such days of suffering precisely because unification had not yet been realized. Rev. Mun Ik-hwan (imprisoned several times. Visiting the North in 1989, met Chairman Kim Il-sung. Died in 1994.) insisted it was a simultaneous matter. But the mainstreamers within the church tried to adopt the line of "democracy first, and then unification."

The biggest reason behind that line of thinking was that we would be branded as "reds" if we should push the unification business first. Therefore, the churches needed to wave the flag of democracy. This was the strategy, and that's the line we followed in persuading churches.

In the 70s, there were times when the North was more powerful than the South in economic terms, which put more fuel in the argument of unification first. In reality, however, most of us believed it to be the other way around. Judging from the domestic situation in the South, as well as from the relations with the US, we believed it right to promote democracy first. We believed we should be heading in the direction of democracy held up by the US. That's why in Tokyo we often communicated with and talked to reporters from *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. They, too, visited Korea themselves, and told us what was going on there when they came back to Tokyo. Those reporters also paid very close attention to what they did in relation to us. Even within Japan, for example, they used public phones instead of making calls to us from their hotel rooms.

After The Democratization and The Present State

Chi: I was resolved to use aliases when I had to write anything, including the "*Letters*". Indeed it was a tool for struggle.

Sekai was called "red" in Korea at that time, and anybody could be arrested for simply possessing a copy. Therefore, I had to use an alias when I was writing for this monthly magazine.

Learning about the Kwangju incident in 1980, I knew I couldn't go home any more, and I concluded at the same time I would not go back home. From then on, therefore, I began to use my real name in writing other than the "*Letters*". For books and magazines for churches/Christians, including *Fukuin-to-Sekai*, every single one of them, I used my real name. I gave up on returning home. In those days I was driven to a tragic but brave state of mind, and thought about my probable death on Japanese soil, or could care less, on the other hand, if I were buried in a graveyard that nobody would dare visit. I had faith that we would overcome, but the question was when, and it used to bring me down.

We collected a lot of money, a tremendous amount. We brought into Korea what

was raised overseas, and what was donated by the churches overseas. The money raised through citizens' movements in Japan, too, was sent to Korea mostly by our people. I can't imagine the total amount it all added up to, for nobody really counted it. The money thus collected was spent to support those who were arrested and in detention, as well as their family members, and to aid those who were robbed of their jobs.

Okamoto: Japan at that time was in a different climate as compared to that of today. So was the US. Both kept a highly critical stance against the military administration, and a lot of people, including assemblymen and women, endorsed the democratization movement and supported its leaders, including Kim Dae-jun.

Chi: Yeah, yeah. The government in the US was not what it appears to be today. The private sector there gave us quite active help, along with money.

Okamoto: Reaching a turning point in 1987, the democratization movement ended in victory. Then afterwards, the cold war structure collapsed, and now a different type of crisis befalls the Peninsula.

Chi: As I told you in the beginning of the interview today, Christians were the only force left that could make an organizational move when in fact all the other organizations had fallen to pieces. The moment the country gained democracy, however, this church force took it that what needed to be done was done, so the movement was all over as far as they were concerned, since they were an emotional force and not a political force as such. Because of their lack of political experience, they failed to cultivate a new political age by taking advantage of the passionate mood of the time.

Besides, the church force completely lacked leadership. Instead, it had an aversion to developing itself into a political organization. Therefore, they didn't try to be one, period.

Let me add one more thing here. There was such an optimism, I must say: "Since democracy is established now, everything will go fine from this point on...." They took an easygoing view of the harsh reality. Though it was a good-willed, conscientious movement as well as a self-sacrificing one, it had very little political vision at all.

In the course of this struggle against a harsh power, the church force sustained itself as a rather closed group of like-minded people, if not comrades, taking precaution against those who were outside the circle, being secretive and self-sacrificial. As long as democracy had been restored, it should have become the center to invite as many people from as many ranks of life as possible. But it couldn't generate such self-reformation.

Despite the fact that the democratic force certainly accomplished a great deal, the people at large didn't give much credit to the force, so it disintegrated and was scattered. At the time of difficulties we human beings are strongly united, but when such hardships disappear and peace comes, we separate and tend to push for our individual purposes. The energy that was once exerted for the purpose of

winning democracy decreased, quality-wise, and lost its power to unite.

Okamoto: Isn't it a wonder that just very, very ordinary people did hold fast to the end in such difficulties?

Chi: It's a historical fact that the Koreans stand strong at the time of difficulties. During hard times the people put up a good fight. The March First Movement is one such example. But then, when the difficult times are gone and you are expected to carry out things one by one under a new political system, we of Korea are not so good. It may be true with other nations, though, too.

Okamoto: The democratization movement made a great sacrifice, didn't it? Some people were tortured while under detention, and others sentenced to death. In Kwangju nearly 200 people were killed.

Chi: So it was the height of tragic heroism, so to speak. As people today look back now, they may say "Were there really such days in the past?" I have a strong sense of shame of being a survivor. That's why I faced endless hesitation in deciding to disclose the identity of the writer of the "*Letters*" this time. I am aware of the look of the deceased.

Okamoto: The Korean people got out of things-colonial by their own strength, and also got out of military control of things-cold-war. The next question that's left is "unification later," isn't it?

Chi: It will be some time, I should think, before we get to talk about unification issues with the present Kim Jong-il administration. We should promote dialogues on reconciliation, cooperation and peace more than anything else, I believe. Unification exists only as a concept, and it would take a long time to see it realized as reality.

We of the South do not feel the suffering of the North as our own. Our society is saturated with egoism, and unable to feel the pain of the North. I'm of the opinion that we have to have leadership that can feel the pain of the North today as the pain of the same nation. I know it's not all that easy from now.

There's an aspect to the question which is rooted in generation. We who grew up before the country was divided, we continue to bear the pain - the pain of not knowing peace until the country is united. Some of our generation may be strongly opposed to communism. They are so anti-communistic because they cannot help but think of the North. The generations after the nation was divided do not necessarily think of the North as if it were their own concern.

In that sense, Mr. Kim Dae-jung 's attempt to open up relations with the North may have been a personal effort as one of the last individuals of the older generation. Even though I personally think that he took the North's situation too easily, I can still understand his sentiments quite well of being driven to do so. Naturally, he and I look at the North differently, since he is a southerner, coming from Chollanamdo, while I am a northerner from Pyongannamdo. Though I have taken a more critical view at the present situation in the North now ...

Having said that, however, I must also acknowledge that Korea has the most democratic administration in Asia today, more democratic and forward-looking than the one in Japan. It might be only Korea these days that won't turn reactionary. Even in Japan, the reactionary forces are stronger, which is why Korea is suffering so much. Though I'm always thankful to Japan for its support in our struggle for democracy as a historical fact ...

Even in comparison to the entire Asian scene, I believe Korea is taking a rather democratic direction. I used to hope that Korea, which now occupies a far more important position in Asia compared to the past, would firmly stay on the road for democracy while realistically taking into account various situations in the US, in Japan and in China. But recently, I find such hopes fading away. People may call it despair in one's old age! More than anything else, the force that has power is getting too narrow-minded, getting very impatient. I can't completely wipe out the fear that the future political world will end up with only a handful of people in power. This may be part of a world-wide skepticism, born after the war in Iraq. I'd like to put hope in some new wisdom from the coming generations.

Let me say a word at the end of this interview, that is, about a worry which troubled me for a long time with regard to the "*Letters*." Any books and writings about struggle almost always regard the one who fights as a hero to an excessive degree. The problem of the gap between that and the historical facts has troubled me for a long time. You may call it a problem of facts, truths, and the Truth. In great agony, I held an ideal of people coming to be one by overcoming all hostilities on the day of victory. It seems to me now, however, that things haven't gone in reality the way I thought and hoped they would. At my age, I can somehow understand, and sympathize with, the sorrow of an old revolutionary.

Here, I'd like to sincerely beg everyone's forgiveness in that I kept on sending "Letters" under an alias for years, without explaining why, however unavoidable the situation we all were under. If I could hear that it helped contribute to the birth of new solidarity between Japan and Korea to some extent, that'll be just great. I can only thank the readers for their generosity.

[END]