

May 4, 1953

**Letter, General Duk Shin Choi to General William K.
Harrison, Jr. on Civilian Internees**

Citation:

"Letter, General Duk Shin Choi to General William K. Harrison, Jr. on Civilian Internees", May 4, 1953, Wilson Center Digital Archive, B-379-017, Papers Related to the Korean American Mutual Defense Treaty, Papers Related to Treaty-Making and International Conferences, Syngman Rhee Institute, Yonsei University
<https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/119374>

Summary:

From April 20 to May 3 1953, Operation Little Switch allowed the exchange of the sick and wounded prisoners of wars between the United Nations, North Korea, and China. In this letter, Major General Choi informs General Harrison that the communist have failed to return hundreds of U.N. POWs because of their broad interpretation of the agreement. General Choi provides a series of steps to improve this agreement but most importantly he urges that the terms "civilian internees" and "displaced person" should be clarified in the Draft Armistice Agreement.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Syngman Rhee Institute, Yonsei University

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

4 May 1953

To: Lt. Gen. William K. Harrison, Jr.
Senior Delegate
United Nations Command

From: Maj. Gen. Duk Shin CHOI
ROKKA Delegate

Subject: Civilian Internees

I wish to take this opportunity, on behalf of my people, to present the following statement.

The repatriation operation of sick and injured captured personnel concluded on 3 May 1953. It has been noted that the Communists failed to render a broad interpretation of the agreement which required them to return sick and injured captured personnel and thus a great number of our personnel entitled to be repatriated during hostilities are still behind the Iron Curtain.

The Communists disappointed our aims and hopes, firstly by not returning some hundreds of our sick and injured prisoners of war, and secondly by totally excluding all those of north Korean birth and our civilian internees from repatriation.

The former point has been under dispute at the Liaison Groups meetings, but so far the latter point has been seemingly unnoticed by the UNC delegation.

The problem of Civilian Internees is referred to in Paragraph 56 of Article of the Draft Armistice Agreement for its overall solution; however, this paragraph provides no stipulations as to the priority repatriation of sick and injured civilian internees during hostilities. I refer you to the Geneva Convention 1949, relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, Chapter 12, Article 132, which reads as follows:

"Each interned person shall be released by the Detaining Power as soon as the reasons which necessitated his internment no longer exist. The Parties to the Conflict shall, moreover, endeavor during the course of hostilities, to conclude agreement for the release, the repatriation, the return to places of residence or the accommodation in a neutral country of certain classes of internees, in particular children, pregnant women and mothers with infants and young children, wounded and sick, and internees who have been detained for a long time."

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It is therefore requested that this problem be duly considered by UNC delegation so that the wishes of thousands of families of the civilians kidnapped by the Communists may be realized, and such action be taken to bring up this matter at the Liaison Groups Meeting to propose:-

1. Agreement for the repatriation of the sick and injured civilian persons, internees who have been detained for a long time and those whose physical condition is weakened due to old age to the places of residence as of 24 June 1950.

2. Accommodation to a neutral nation pending repatriation.

To satisfactorily conduct negotiations in this regard, it is advisable to clarify the definitions of "civilian internees" of Geneva Convention and "Displaced Person" of Draft Armistice Agreement. Also it will be necessary to clarify the fact that families of the displaced civilians reside in the area of this side.

On the Communist part, it is evident that our youth civilians are engaged in some activity under Communist regime; however, the old and aged persons cannot be any food for Communist man-power. If we only make an issue out of this matter, Communist agreement is possible.

It is my sincere request that this problem be dealt with profound understanding as with military personnel, and that due recommendations be made to a higher authority if necessary. This repatriation of civilian internees would be appreciated by a million Koreans who lost their kin due to the war and those whose lives are on the verge of death in Communist hands.

Duk Shin CHOI
Maj. Gen., ROKA Delegate