

## Society for the Dissemination of Historical Fact

Shin Sakuma Bldg. 3F, 2-13-14, Nishi-Shimbashi, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-0003, JAPAN

Tel 03-3519-4366 Fax 03-3519-4367 URL <http://www.sdh-fact.com>

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Dear Representative:

House Resolution 759, a bill concerning comfort women which is critical of Japan and has been introduced to the United States House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Relations, exhibits an extreme distortion of historical understanding, and should be retracted without delay.

House Resolution 759 states "the Government of Japan, during its colonial occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II, organized the subjugation and kidnapping, for the sole purpose of sexual servitude, of young women, who became known to the world as 'comfort women'; but historically, this is completely untrue. What *did* exist were legal, privately operated brothels established in the war zone, and the prostitutes who worked in them were called "comfort women."

This has been clearly recorded in official documents of the American military.

In 1945, in Myitkyina in northern Burma, twenty Korean comfort women and their employers, a Mr. and Mrs. Kitamura, were interviewed. In the record, we can find statements such as "'comfort women' are nothing more than simple prostitutes," and "the women's average total monthly earnings were ¥1,500, and ¥750 went to their bosses." (Note: this when the monthly pay of a sergeant in the Japanese army was ¥30, meaning the prostitutes made over 25 times more money!) The records are from the United States Office of War Information, Psychological Warfare Team, attached to the U.S. Army Forces India-Burma Theater, APO 689.

In March of 1945, depositions were taken from three Korean civilian employees of the Japanese army. They said, "In the battle zones of the Pacific War, the Korean comfort women we met were all either volunteers, or women who had been sold by their parents. If the women had been victims of coercion, all the Koreans both young and old would have risen up in rage, and regardless of whatever retaliation, killed the Japanese." (From "Composite Report on Three Korean Civilians List No. 78, dated 28 March, 1945, 'Special Question on Koreans'" in the U.S. National Archives.)

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In the case of Japan, the falsehood that is being spread all over the world today is that there was a point in time when some Japanese conducted a campaign wherein comfort women (prostitutes) were rounded up like slaves, with governmental authority, and forced to be the companions of Japanese soldiers. Moreover, the Japanese government’s response has been, without foundation on fact, to spread this falsehood and give preference to the concerns of the governments of neighboring countries. Three points need to be addressed:

- 1) In 1983, a Japanese man named Yoshida Seiji confessed, “During the War, I went to Cheju Island [in Korea] under orders from the army to round up several women to be military comfort women.”
- 2) The *Asahi Newspaper* reported his “confession” as truth, and on Aug. 11, 1991, they printed “One of the ‘Korean military comfort women’ who were forcibly taken to the battlefield as comfort women has come forward.”
- 3) On Aug. 4, 1993, Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Kônô Yôhei, published *Kônô Statement*. Therein, he said that “There is a precedent for the authorities being involved,” and recognized a “coercion by authorities.”

But are these confessions, reports, and statements actually based upon truth?

First, Yoshida Seiji’s testimony is a complete falsehood. In 1989, the *Cheju Island Newspaper* published an article by a female journalist, who had conducted an on the spot investigation of the issue. The local residents all denied the story, saying “We have lived here since that time, and we know nothing of this.” A local historian also refuted the story, saying, “I have followed up the research myself, but it is simply not true.”

Based on such testimony, the journalist wrote a total refutation of Yoshida’s account. However, the Human Rights Commission’s Coomaraswami Report accepted as complete truth and included in it the totally false testimony of Yoshida Seiji.

The *Asahi* report was also not true. In fact, this woman, Kim Hak-sun, was a plaintiff seeking to sue the Japanese government to obtain an apology and compensation. She filed a brief with the Tokyo District Court, stating “I was sold and had to become a *gi-saeng* [Korean female entertainer].” However, the author of the *Asahi* article, Uemura Takashi, did not include this critical fact that *she had been sold by her parents to a gi-saeng house*.

Finally, “Kônô Statement” offers no proof of women being forcibly taken away either. On the Korean side, they listened to the one-sided testimony of sixteen Korean former comfort women. Not one investigation was undertaken to verify their testimony by looking at the other side.

The Korean government made a request of the Japanese government: “In order to satisfy our people, please acknowledge that there was coercion. If you do so, we shall not

bring up this issue again." This was an obvious attempt at an easy resolution and an immediate "diplomatic solution." As there was no evidence, however, of the coerced removal of women to serve as comfort women, the Japanese government's position was that "Businessmen recruited them, but since there were cases where women were deceived or came to hate themselves, there was coercion." In other words, the definition of "coercion" had changed from "forced by the authorities" to "doing what they didn't really want to do." Applying this change in definition, cases of "coercion" would arise not just among prostitutes but among people beyond number in all manner of business. This is plain foolishness.

Although untrue, the insistence that Japan admit to the coerced removal of women is a blot upon Japan's honor. The Korean government, which truly *should* "not bring up this issue again," continues to persistently criticize Japan. It is recounted in Korean textbooks, and these false accounts are broadcast throughout the world.

Just as in America, there are those in Japan who are opposed to their own country — for whatever reason. They go to Korea, they engage in litigation against the Japanese government, they go "plaintiff-hunting," they pressure the Human Rights Commission, and they seek passage of resolutions condemning the Japanese government. It is likely that "anti-Japan Japanese" are the true basis for this problem.

Roh Tae-woo, who was president of South Korea when this problem surfaced, gave an interview to a Japanese monthly magazine, in which he said, "We don't want to make an issue of this, but as the Japanese mass media has made a great fuss about it, unfortunately, we can't ignore it."

As a historical fact, the largest single population of comfort women was Japanese. A recent study reveals that about 40% were Japanese, 20% Korean, 30% from local areas and 10% from other areas.

The conclusion is clear. The statements in House Resolution 759 completely lack any basis in historical reality. It is unbelievable that the Congress of the United States of America -- the world's representative democracy -- would undertake such a resolution to denounce another country's government on the basis of falsehoods.

Although we admit Japan's wartime record has things in it we wish were different, Japan should not be condemned based on propagandistic accounts of things that simply did not happen. We request the withdrawal of House Resolution 759.

Yours very sincerely,



Kase Hideaki, Chairman  
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