

# **BEHIND THE COMFORT WOMEN CONTROVERSY: HOW LIES BECAME TRUTH**

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Note: Japanese, Chinese and Korean personal names have been rendered surname first, in accordance with customs in those countries.

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## PREFACE

First of all, I would like to extend heartfelt greetings to all those kindred spirits who have embraced the universal values of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

In 2007, the citizens of Japan were stunned by a spate of resolutions condemning the Japanese government in connection with the comfort women (prostitutes who provided sex services to Japanese military personnel prior to and during World War II) emanating from the U.S. House of Representatives, the Canadian Parliament and the EU Parliament. Their reaction was perfectly understandable, given that the accusations in those resolutions simply parrot anti-Japanese propaganda, and have no basis whatsoever in fact.

Take, for example, the following language in the U.S. House resolution:

Whereas the Government of Japan, during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II, officially commissioned the acquisition of young women for the sole purpose of sexual servitude to its Imperial Armed Forces, who became known to the world as *ianfu* or ‘comfort women’;

Whereas the ‘comfort women’ system of forced military prostitution by the Government of Japan, considered unprecedented in its cruelty and magnitude, included gang rape, forced abortions, humiliation, and sexual violence resulting in mutilation, death, or eventual suicide in one of the largest cases of human trafficking in the 20th century;<sup>1</sup>

To make matters absolutely clear, these accusations can be traced to political propaganda; not one of them is true.

Beginning in the 1990s, Japan was the arena of contentious debates over these very accusations, which became the subject of diplomatic discord between Japan and South Korea. The Japanese government conducted an exhaustive investigation, scrutinizing thousands of documents. Scholars in the private sector engaged in separate research efforts. No evidence was uncovered indicating that the Japanese government had coerced anyone to serve as a comfort woman.

According to a statement issued by the Japanese government in 1994 (commonly referred to as the “Kono Statement” after then chief Cabinet Secretary Kono Yohei, who delivered it) mentions that “in many cases [comfort women] were recruited against their own will.” This means that they were deceived by procurers or were born into poor families who sold them into prostitution. It also acknowledges that “at times, administrative/military personnel directly took part in the recruitments.”<sup>2</sup> Here, the statement is referring to exactly one case in which several Japanese soldiers stationed at an outpost in Java, Indonesia, forced a female

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<sup>1</sup> <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c110:2:./temp/~c1107o1Q34::>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/women/fund/state9308.html>

Dutch prisoner of war to work as a prostitute for approximately one month, in violation of military regulations. When military authorities got wind of the crime (a war crime), they immediately shut down the brothel. The Allies later tried the perpetrators of the crime (five soldiers and four private citizens), who were executed or given prison sentences.

The Kono Statement acknowledges that many women who serviced Japanese soldiers in war zones did so because no other options were available to them during the era of imperialism. The statement also expresses empathy for the ordeals they endured, and acknowledges moral responsibility.

Later in the Kono Statement, the Japanese government apologizes to the Korean people who suffered under Japanese colonial rule, and reiterates its “firm determination never to repeat the same mistake.”<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the government offers an apology to the comfort women for their pain and hardship. There has been no change in this position.

In North Korea, Kim Jong-il’s terrorist administration is attempting to deflect global attention from its abductions of private citizens by launching a relentless political propaganda campaign at the United Nations and elsewhere, accusing the Japanese government of forcing 200,000 Korean women to become sex slaves prior to World War II. Although the series of resolutions condemning Japan, which stand on the same lies and misconceptions as the North Korean propaganda, has come as a great shock to the Japanese people, it has given terrorist elements a cause for great rejoicing.

It would give me great pleasure if my book were received as my attempt to provide information about the investigations and research on this controversy conducted in Japan, in the hope of widening the network of people who cherish freedom and democracy. For the past 16 years, I have been on the front lines of the debate over the comfort women controversy, as it unfolded in Japan. The English translation has been done by volunteers who share my views and concerns. The great majority of Japanese will be heartened if readers come to realize that at the heart of the controversy is a tragedy, meaning that prostitution was one of the few options for many poor women, and that neither administrative nor military authorities ever forced women to become sex slaves.

Nishioka Tsutomu  
Tokyo, 2007

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER 1: THE MAIN FORCES BEHIND LITIGATION INVOLVING FORMER COMFORT WOMEN

### **Fabricated confession**

I first became involved with the comfort women controversy in 1991. Most of my recent work concerns North Korea, particularly abductions of Japanese nationals. But my specialty is Japan-Korea relations (the title of my master's thesis is "How Postwar South Korean Intellectuals Perceive Japan"). Between 1950 and 1980, I devoted a great deal of time and effort to research exploring topics that have incited Koreans to criticize Japan over the years, and the logic behind the criticism. Then, from 1982 to 1984, I was a specialist researcher attached to the Foreign Ministry at the Japanese Embassy in Seoul.

The research topic assigned to me by the Foreign Ministry was "South Koreans' Perception of Japan," which was essentially an extension of my master's thesis. It was then that I encountered the first problem having to do with history — what I call the "first textbook incident."

This problem was contextually very similar to the comfort women problem, which reared its head later. Anti-Japanese elements in Japan embarked on a mammoth campaign devoted to publicizing a lie: they claimed that the Ministry of Education had ordered textbook screeners to substitute "expansion" for "aggression" in accounts of modern Japan-China relations in Japanese middle school history textbooks. Consequently, Chief Cabinet Secretary Kiichi Miyazawa issued an apology to South Korea on behalf of the Japanese government. Then another criterion was added to the list to be observed during the textbook-screening process: "Textbooks ought to show understanding and seek international harmony in their treatment of modern and contemporary historical events involving neighboring Asian countries."

I am not a historian, but as a regional studies researcher, I've been observing situations like this for quite some time. If I were asked what threw Japan-Korea relations off kilter, or how the perception gap arose, or who caused it, I could tell you. My first book, which came out in 1992, was entitled *The Mountain of Misconceptions Separating Japan and Korea*.<sup>4</sup> It deals with the controversies over the comfort women and textbooks. Since then, I have been following these controversies, and participating in the debate against the Japan-bashers over the comfort women.

Now, to describe the course of events: in 1983, a book was published — one that greatly distorted the Japanese and Korean perceptions of comfort women. Entitled *My War Crimes: Abduction of Koreans*, it was written by Yoshida Seiji. In his foreword, Yoshida writes:

For about three years, from 1942 until Japan lost the war, I was head of a labor mobilization group called Yamaguchi Prefecture National Labor Service Association. My job was to procure Korean laborers. I was a loyal citizen, a self-sacrificing patriot serving my country by going on "slave hunts." (...) I hope Japanese born after the war will read my book and learn that during one chapter of history, we enslaved Koreans.

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<sup>4</sup> Nishioka Tsutomu, *Nikkan gokai no shin'en (The mountain of misconceptions separating Japan and South Korea)* (Tokyo: Aki Shobo, 1992).

By showing remorse for such behavior, we Japanese will have taken a step toward becoming civilized human beings.<sup>5</sup>

In 2007, a resolution demanding that the Japanese government “formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for its Imperial Armed Force’s coercion of young women into sexual slavery, known to the world as ‘comfort women,’ during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II”<sup>6</sup> was submitted to the U.S. House of Representatives, creating a huge uproar. The origins of this resolution, which has no basis in fact, can be found in Yoshida’s fictional confession about “slave hunts.”

One of the main themes of my book involves tracing the path from Yoshida’s lies to the U.S. House of Representatives. To that end, I must again quote from Yoshida’s book. This is a lengthy citation, and not pleasant reading, but I ask readers’ forbearance.

I ordered an immediate roundup of the women in the village. Houses lined the road, each one surrounded by a stone wall. My crew, armed with wooden swords and guns, opened the doors, entered the houses, and began searching for women.

I climbed up on a wall and looked around. I saw 20 or 30 women gathered at a large house in front of me. Young girls, along with older women, were sitting in rows in a room with a wood floor and on the veranda, weaving rushes to make cylindrical Korean hats. When I signaled, my crew and the soldiers rushed into the house.

The women began to scream, and I could hear the crew and soldiers yelling. Some men emerged from a silent, nearby house, and ran down the street. There were about a dozen of them. They gathered inside the wall around the house; I could tell they were agitated. My crew emerged from the house, in pairs, each dragging a wailing woman by the wrists to the road. They had captured eight young women. The other men were yelling something in Korean.

The road was narrow, with stone walls on both sides. Our path was blocked in both directions by more than 100 villagers. Among them were 20 or 30 half-naked robust-looking men, who might have been fishermen. They didn’t seem to be afraid of us Japanese, and began walking toward us, snarling and screaming.

Sgt. Tani ordered the soldiers to fasten their bayonets, but the villagers kept on yelling. He ordered the soldiers to advance. My crew followed them, dragging the eight girls, who were sobbing. Five or six strong Korean men came forward; they stood in the road, blocking our way. They were waving their arms excited and howling. Exasperated, one of the higher-ranking soldiers with a mustache raised his sword, yelled and started running. The villagers screamed and retreated; the men escaped inside the wall.

When we arrived at our truck parked in the road, the girls started screaming and struggling. They were sturdy young women. As they squirmed, their tanned faces

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<sup>5</sup> Yoshida Seiji, *Watakushi no senso hanzai: Chosenjin kyosei renko* (My war crimes: abduction of Koreans) (Tokyo: San’ichi Shobo, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=hr110-121>



stiffened, and you could see their white teeth as they twisted and turned, attempting to escape from their captors. When they succeeded, crew members tried to grab them from behind. The girls fell onto the grass in a heap. Their white Korean robes opened up in front, exposing their breasts, and rode up at the bottom. They kicked out with their sandaled feet; all in all, they gave the crew a hard time. The soldiers thought the whole scene was very funny and entertaining. My crew finally subdued the girls, grabbed their arms and pushed them into the back of the truck, which was covered with canvas. The crew left right away.

After we had driven east on a main coastal road for about five or six kilometers, Sgt. Tani ordered us to drive the truck into a thicket near a rocky hill. Then he said, “The soldiers expect a reward for protecting the procurement crew. Let’s stop here for a rest for 30 minutes and let them have some fun.”

The soldiers were delighted when they heard Sgt. Tani order a rest break. Once my crew had gotten out of the truck, they jumped into the back. When the girls screamed, the soldiers laughed. No sooner were they procured than the soldiers initiated them: they were comfort women now.<sup>7</sup>

The comfort women portrayed by Yoshida would indeed have been sex slaves — if he was telling the truth, that is. Later he writes that the procurement of comfort women was done in accordance with an order from the Japanese Army instructing him to “mobilize a Korean female volunteer corps.”

On May 15, 1943, a first lieutenant from Western District Army Headquarters arrived at the Yamaguchi Prefectural Police Department’s Labor Administration office. The officer delivered a labor mobilization order addressed to the Yamaguchi Labor Service Association chairman (also governor of Yamaguchi Prefecture). The head of the Labor Administration Section was also secretary of the Labor Service Association. As head of the Shimonoseki Branch Mobilization Department, I was asked to be present because I would be executing the mobilization order.

The lieutenant explained that the mobilization order was issued to National Labor Service Association groups in prefectures in Japan’s Western District, and in each province in the southern part of Korea. Two thousand workers were to be mobilized. The order delivered to the Yamaguchi Prefectural National Labor Service Association contained the following information.

1. Volunteer corps of 200 Korean women to serve as entertainers for the Imperial Army
2. Age: 18-29 (married women acceptable; pregnant women not acceptable)
3. Healthy women (medical examination required, especially tests for venereal diseases)
4. Duration: One year (renewal possible if desired)
5. Remuneration: ¥30 per month
6. Clothing allowance: ¥20 (to be paid in advance)
7. Place of assignment: central China
8. Recruiting areas: southwestern Korea and Cheju Island
9. Departure date: 12:00 noon, 30 May 1943
10. Meeting place: Western Army, Unit 74

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<sup>7</sup> Yoshida, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-110.

The women's Labor Service unit was renamed the Female Volunteer Corps. Students at girls' schools and local girls (members of girls' youth groups) working in munitions factories were called "Female Volunteer Corps," but the female volunteer corps members who provided entertainment to soldiers of the Imperial Army were actually comfort women.

(...)

The order to mobilize 200 Korean comfort women was reissued as a procurement work order and handed to me by the head of the Labor Administration Section.<sup>8</sup>

After his book came out, in December 1983, Yoshida visited Korea, apologizing wherever he went; he even had an expiatory tablet erected. But his efforts seemed to end there, and the problem seemed to have gone away.

When I read the book, soon after it was issued, I was suspicious. The scenario Yoshida describes didn't seem credible. It didn't jibe with what I had heard from older Koreans who had experienced colonial times.

Japanese specialists in Korean history, the masochistic media (especially *Asahi Shimbun*) and other Japan-haters swallowed Yoshida's confession whole, without even bothering to check the facts. Consequently, after the late 1980s, an increasing number of historical works and dictionaries carried references to the coercion of comfort women. People born too late to know about the colonial era began to believe them. Then, in 1989 or so, Socialist Party members began bringing up the subject of comfort women in Diet sessions.

At about the same time in South Korea, feminist movements and the left-wing media pounced on the myth about the coercion of comfort women. It was then that the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan got its start.

As I will explain later, rumors that the female volunteer corps and the comfort women, which bore no resemblance to each other, were one and the same were already becoming ingrained in people's minds. When Yoshida used the term "female volunteer corps" to refer to the comfort women, the die was cast.

### **Former comfort women denounce Japan**

In August 1991, about eight years after Yoshida's book was published, *Asahi Shimbun* came out with an article under a banner headline reading "Korean Former Comfort Woman Breaks Silence After Half a Century." It begins as follows:

During the Sino-Japanese War and World War II, Korean women were told they would be joining Female Volunteer Corps, but were instead transported to battle zones and forced to provide sex services to Japanese military personnel. It has come to light that one of these so-called "comfort women" lives in Seoul. The Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (Yun Chung-ok, co-chairwoman: umbrella organization

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 100-102.

for 16 groups with a total membership of approximately 300,000). The Council interviewed the woman, and on August 10, turned over a recording of the interview to an *Asahi Shimbun* reporter. On the tape, the woman can be heard saying, “Even now, my skin crawls when I think about those days.” Nearly 50 years after the war, she is finally able to talk about experiences that she had kept hidden deep inside.<sup>9</sup>

In the article the woman was given a pseudonym, but she revealed her real name (Kim Hak-sun) when the Japan-bashing continued at a press conference on August 14. At the end of the year, Kim toured Japan, telling her story at every destination. She then sued the Japanese government, demanding compensation.

*Asahi Shimbun* gave this woman and her story extensive coverage. Numerous articles about comfort women appeared in other publications, laying the foundation for the still-unresolved comfort women controversy, and a grass-roots campaign aimed at forcing the Japanese to take responsibility in some way. Soon the campaign would evolve into a domestic consensus and conviction that as a nation, Japan had committed an unforgivable crime.

Then an article by Chuo University Professor Yoshimi Yoshiaki, a historian, appeared on the front page of the January 11, 1992 edition of the *Asahi Shimbun*. Yoshimi announced that he had uncovered sources at a Defense Agency research institute stating that the Japanese military was involved in the abduction of comfort women. His disclosure threw the government into a panic, prompting Chief Cabinet Secretary Kato Koichi to issue a statement of apology. This was exactly the effect intended by *Asahi Shimbun* and the reason for its intensive coverage of the issue.

As it later became clear, Yoshimi had been aware of the sources in question for quite some time. However, *Asahi Shimbun* didn’t release the information until Kim Hak-sun had filed her suit, the comfort women controversy had reached frenzy level, and Prime Minister Miyazawa’s visit to South Korea was only a few days away.

Newspapers commonly attempt to inform the public by explaining a topic, concept or term when it comes into the news for the first time. When *Asahi Shimbun* announced Prof. Yoshimi’s “discovery,” it supplied the following explanation at the bottom of the front page:

In China in the 1930s, Japanese military personnel raped a great many women. To hold anti-Japanese sentiment at bay and prevent the spread of venereal diseases, brothels were established. According to former soldiers and army doctors, 80% of the women who worked in the first brothels were Koreans. With the outbreak of the Pacific War, *women — mainly Korean women — were transported to the brothels under the pretext that they would be serving in a female volunteer corps. Their numbers are estimated to have been 80,000 or 200,000.* (Italics supplied.)<sup>10</sup>

There is tremendous significance in the italicized portion of the text. At that time, Japan was mobilizing workers in accordance with the National Mobilization Act. “Female volunteer corps” was the name given to groups of women drafted to work in munitions factories. The

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<sup>9</sup> *Asahi Shimbun*, 11 August 1991.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

term was never used in connection with comfort women. I know plenty of women who were mobilized into female volunteer corps, and all of them have assured me emphatically that their groups had nothing to do with comfort women.

Members of female volunteer corps were mobilized in accordance with the National Labor Service Cooperation Act, which stated that unmarried women between the ages of 14 and 25, as well as men aged 14-40, would join National Labor Service Corps. Beginning in 1943, married women were also urged to join female volunteer corps but, as the term implies, they were not obligated to join. When the Female Volunteer Labor Act (Imperial Order No. 519) was enacted in 1944, women between the ages of 12 and 39 were legally bound to join volunteer corps.<sup>11</sup>

It is unlikely in the extreme that *Asahi Shimbun* was unaware of these historical facts. In actuality, it was the conventional wisdom among left-wing, masochistic scholars of the time that the mobilization of workers into compulsory “volunteer” groups in colonial Korea also included comfort women.

Here are some examples of that conventional wisdom.

Beginning in 1943, approximately 200,000 Korean women were mobilized into teams called “female volunteer corps.” Approximately 50,000-70,000 young, unmarried, women among their number were forced to become comfort women.<sup>12</sup>

In August 1944, the Female Volunteer Corps Labor Act was promulgated. Several hundred thousand Korean women between the ages of 12 and 40 were mobilized; several tens of thousands of unmarried women among their number were pressed into service as comfort women for Japanese military personnel.<sup>13</sup>

The origin of both of these “explanations” is Yoshida Seiji’s book. As I wrote earlier, he stated that there was a roundup of women in 1943 on Cheju Island for a volunteer corps of comfort women.

By stating that “women — mainly Korean women — were transported to the brothels under the pretext that they would be serving in a female volunteer corps,” *Asahi Shimbun* was claiming that they were compelled to become comfort women, as Yoshida wrote. This is “coercion in the narrow sense” of the word, which Prime Minister Abe has denied.

In 1997, *Asahi Shimbun* changed the focus of its coverage to the hardships the women experienced once they entered the brothels, i.e., the coercive nature of their environments. But in 1992, the newspaper had charged that the recruitment of the comfort women was “systematically coercive.”

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<sup>11</sup> Momose Takashi, *Jiten: Showa senzenki no Nippon* (Sourcebook: Japan in the Showa era prior to World War II) (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1990).

<sup>12</sup> Ito Abito, ed., *Chosen wo shiru jiten* (Cyclopedia of Korea) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1986). This text appears unchanged in the fourth printing (revised and expanded edition) released on 05 July 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Takeda Yukio, ed., *Chosen shi* (Korean history) (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1985).

Meanwhile, the living witness to the slave hunts (Yoshida), and former comfort woman Kim Hak-sun had been making frequent appearances on Japanese television and in newspaper articles.

The January 23, 1992 edition of the *Asahi Shimbun* carried an editorial entitled “The Comfort Women.” It quoted Yoshida as saying, “They used the police, a state power, to abduct women in the colony using means that precluded escape. They transported them to battle zones and confined them there for a year or two years. They were gang-raped, and abandoned when the Japanese military retreated. It’s my guess that half the men and all the women I personally abducted died.”<sup>14</sup> This was followed by a portion of a conversation between the author of the editorial and Yoshida: “I was concerned that Mr. Yoshida would be inconvenienced if his name appeared in the media. When I asked him about that, his cheerful reply was ‘That’s all right. It doesn’t bother me anymore.’”<sup>15</sup>

When I read the editorial, I realized that Yoshida was the answer to *Asahi Shimbun’s* prayers. Now the trio was complete: Yoshida (the conscientious witness), the documents unearthed by Prof. Yoshimi, and the former comfort woman, the victim. This unfortunate alignment created the mistaken impression of being evidence that women were abducted in slave hunts, and forced to service Japanese soldiers. *Asahi Shimbun*, other anti-Japanese media and activists had seized upon them and used them in their attempt to ruin Japan’s reputation.

The prevailing view at that time was that Japanese troops had abducted Korean women and forced them to become prostitutes, but the Japanese government would neither acknowledge nor apologize for these inhuman crimes.

I have vivid memories of Keio University Professor Okonogi Masao’s January 1992 editorial in *Sankei Shimbun*: “What I have learned is so horrible it makes me want to cover my eyes.” He had offered his political conclusion without ever bothering to examine the facts.<sup>16</sup>

Then, on January 13, Chief Cabinet Secretary Kato Koichi issued an official statement, saying that “we would like to offer our heartfelt apologies to the women who endured unspeakable suffering while serving as comfort women.” This was the first government statement issued in connection with the comfort women problem. On January 17, Prime Minister Miyazawa went to Korea, where he apologized to President Roh Tae-woo eight times.

### **Japanese instigated suit instituted in Korea**

The February 1992 issue of the monthly *Hoseki* carried transcripts of interviews conducted by journalist Usuki Keiko with former comfort women. The title was “Another Pacific War: Former Korean Comfort Women Tell Their Stories: the Depravity and Shamelessness of the

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<sup>14</sup> *Asahi Shimbun*, 23 January 1992 (evening edition).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Sankei Shimbun*, 25 January 1992.

Japanese Soldiers Who Abused Our Bodies.” Those who agreed to the interview were Kim Hak-sun and two women who used pseudonyms.

Curious about what they had said, I immediately obtained a copy of the magazine. I was wondering whether they were going to say they had been abducted, thereby proving Yoshida Seiji was right.

But Kim Hak-sun said that she had been sold into prostitution for ¥40. Neither of the other two women said anything about having been kidnapped by Japanese soldiers. “What’s this?” I thought.

Poverty was a pervasive serious problem in both Japan and Korea prior to World War II. In those days, women were indeed sold into prostitution. Everyone is aware of that; it is not news. What was supposed to make the comfort women newsworthy was their coming forward to say they were coerced.

Reading the apologies offered by the chief cabinet secretary and the prime minister, and the emotional coverage in the Japanese media, I thought, “Something’s wrong here. This may be a huge scam. No one has offered any proof that those women were coerced into prostitution.”

I was aware that, for the court proceedings held in connection with the suit instituted by Kim Haksun, *et al.* against the Japanese government, Japanese had gone to Korea and posted fliers advertising for plaintiffs.

Actually, theirs was not the first suit filed in connection with comfort women. Its precursor went to trial in 1990. When I learned that that suit had been instituted by Japanese, I realized that there must be some extraordinary lies involved.

It so happened that the monthly *Bungei Shunju* had printed an article entitled “Japan-Korea Relations Have Deteriorated So Much that We Must Apologize” in its March issue, which went on sale on February 10, 1992. The article is a dialogue between Sato Katsumi, director of the Modern Korea Institute, and Takushoku University Professor Tanaka Akira. These two pioneering specialists in postwar North and South Korean studies, who have many friends in South Korea, were also my mentors.

Both men spoke candidly. They deplored the state of the relationship between Japan and South Korea, reminding us that all reparations had been paid in accordance with the Japan-Korea Treaty. They mentioned a white paper, a statement of claim issued by the South Korean government, which lists the uses to which monies received from Japan were put, including monies intended for individuals. During their discussion, they indicated that the repeated apologies offered by Japan in response to South Korean demands had caused anti-Korean sentiment to spread against the Japanese. They also referred to the fact that the “comfort women trial” had been instigated by Japanese.

Scholars who have been engaged in research on South Korea for 30 years, or 40 years, came out and said that we must stop apologizing to the Koreans, that the more we apologize the worse relations between the two nations will become, using their real names. The shock waves were mammoth. Their statements were met with harsh criticism from the South Koreans, who pronounced them absurd.

## **Fact-finding investigation commissioned by magazine**

As repercussions rippled throughout Japan and Korea, the editorial division of the monthly *Bungei Shunju* asked me to investigate the comfort women controversy and write up the results. To be candid, I wavered about accepting the assignment. As I wrote earlier, at that point I was having serious misgivings about the Japanese and Korean media coverage of the problem, and the Japanese government's response. Therefore, I knew that someone had to do painstaking research into the facts and make the results known to the world.

But at the core of the problem was sex, a topic that people are generally unwilling to discuss frankly. Also involved was the fact that I, a citizen of a nation that had colonized Korea, might end up criticizing women who had been victimized and were now old. I would rather have someone else do this job.

But as I vacillated, the lies continued to spread. I finally assented, believing that I could not, in good conscience, refuse. I was afraid that Japan's relationship with Korea, a nation where many of my professors, mentors, friends and acquaintances live, might be irreparably damaged.

I was convinced that there is nothing more absurd (or harmful) than debates and apologies that have no basis in fact. I was fully prepared to be the first to offer an apology if I was proven wrong, if this wasn't a scam and my investigation revealed that Japan had used force to victimize innocent Korean women.

The editor in chief of *Bungei Shunju* told me, "When you conduct your investigation, resign yourself to being vilified, along with me." He promised me the editorial division's full support. He assigned one of his most capable editors to the project full time, and told me I could use as many investigators as I wanted, and buy as many references as I needed. He said my research should be done wherever it needed to be, and not to worry about money. Therefore, I wasn't a solo investigator, but part of a team working on the same project.

The objective of my research was to discover whether the comfort women were so poor they had to sell their bodies to stay alive, or whether they were sex slaves coerced into prostitution by military or government personnel.

First of all, I scrutinized the document that Prof. Yoshimi offered as proof of military involvement. It permitted me to confirm an important fact. Yes, the military was involved in recruiting comfort women, but only by attempting to prevent private brokers from engaging in immoral behavior and claiming they were acting on behalf of the military.

Not only did the document prove that the military did not coerce women, it also proved that they tried to stop brokers from engaging in unlawful acts during their recruiting campaigns. Yes, the military were involved, but their involvement had benevolent intentions.

I will quote from the document as published in *Asahi Shimbun*. It appears in a collection of documents exchanged between the Ministry of the Army and units assigned to China and entitled "China Area Army Journal: Secret."

Subject: Recruitment of Comfort Women (Communication from adjutant to head staff officers of North China Area Army and Central China Expeditionary Army)

China Area Army No. 745: Secret

04 March 1938

We advise Expeditionary Army personnel to exercise extreme caution in the recruiting of female workers to avoid harm to the prestige of the military and the emergence of social problems. Be aware that unscrupulous brokers may say they are acting on behalf of the military, thus causing the military to lose prestige or generating misunderstandings among the local population. They may also cause social problems by violating regulations and recruiting through war correspondents or visitors. Some of the recruiters cannot be trusted; they lack the judgment required of recruiters, and must be watched carefully, as they have previously been arrested or interrogated by the police for using improper recruiting methods akin to kidnapping. Select recruiters with care and keep control over them. Maintain close contact with the military police and local police authorities.<sup>17</sup>

This document does not prove that the military forced women to serve as prostitutes. *Asahi Shimbun* reported that this document and two others attest to military involvement. But they simply state that the brothels were established to improve military discipline, as rapes committed by Japanese soldiers in war zones would be used as anti-Japanese political propaganda.

Following a logical thought process, we have: the military were concerned about inciting adverse public sentiment in war zones. There was already a fledgling independence movement in colonial Korea. The military wouldn't have dared angering the local population by coercing women to become prostitutes. Therefore, the document found by Prof. Yoshimi does not prove that the comfort women were coerced. On the contrary, it proves that they were *not* coerced.

But the atmosphere at the time was obviously conducive to the creation of a mass delusion and fraud (the flames of which were fueled by *Asahi Shimbun's* coverage and the chief cabinet secretary's flustered apology) — namely, that the comfort women were victims of coercion.

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<sup>17</sup> China Area Army Notice No. 745, 04 March 1938.



## CHAPTER 2: WERE THE COMFORT WOMEN ABDUCTED BY JAPANESE AUTHORITIES?

### **The link between the Association for the Pacific War Victims officer and *Asahi Shimbun***

I examined the testimony of the former comfort woman who had come forward. I wanted to know whether it would attest to her having been the victim of official coercion (abduction by military or government authorities).

Since she had instituted a lawsuit, I decided to have a look at the petition, which I acquired. I discovered that it agreed with the article I had read in *Hoseki*. An excerpt follows.

Kim Hak-sun's family was poor, so she stopped going to school. To earn some money, she did babysitting and maid's work. She was adopted by Kim Tae-won, who sent her to a school for *kisaeng* (entertainer-prostitutes) when she was 14, for three years. In the spring of 1939, when Kim Hak-sun was 17, her adoptive father convinced her and another girl named Emiko, who was one year her senior, to go with him to China, "where you can make a lot of money."<sup>18</sup>

Kim Hak-sun states clearly that she became a *kisaeng* because her family was poor. When I discussed her case with the *Bungei Shunju* editors, we agreed that it was similar to those of young Japanese women who were sold into prostitution by their parents. But how can anyone claim Kim was abducted?

The more I investigated, the more malicious the *Asahi Shimbun* editorial seemed. Then I learned that the daughter of Yang Sun-in, the former executive director of a South Korean organization that goes by the name of Association for the Pacific War Victims, is married to Uemura Takashi, a reporter for *Asahi Shimbun*. If my sources were accurate, it did seem as though Uemura had manufactured his article out of whole cloth to give his mother-in-law and her accomplices an edge in court.

In any case, I had decided to track down absolutely every lead, including this one. That meant going to South Korea to meet Yang Sun-in. The people at the *Bungei Shunju* editorial division expressed concern when I told them of my plans. They were afraid that I might be assaulted by survivors, activists, or their agents; I was encouraged to travel with a reporter and a bodyguard. I declined their offer to save myself from having to interpret for an entourage.

Once in Seoul, I obtained the phone number of the Association from a Japanese foreign correspondent. I made an appointment to meet Yang Sun-in at the organization's office. Actually, if luck hadn't been on my side, that meeting might have been canceled at the last minute. Takagi Ken'ichi, the Japanese lawyer representing the plaintiffs in the suit, was scheduled to visit the Association's office at about the same time to prepare for the trial. Since I had criticized his activities in *Gendai Koria* (Modern Korea) and other publications, I was sure he knew who I was. If Takagi had showed up at the office prior to my appointment,

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<sup>18</sup> Petition submitted to Tokyo District Court by Kim Hak-sun *et al.* on December 6, 1991); for the complete testimony, see Hirabayashi Hisae, *Kyosei renko to jugun ianfu* (Abductions and comfort women) (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Center, 1992).

Uemura would have warned Yang Sun-in about me, and she would not have agreed to the interview. Fortunately, I arrived in Seoul a few days before he did.

I went to the Association's office bearing a gift (a box of fruit) and proffered my business card (the one that says I'm a university professor). I announced that I was doing research on Korea. When I mentioned that I was particularly interested in the comfort women controversy, Ms. Yang opened up to me.

I asked her how the lawsuit had come to be filed. (I will describe her response in detail later.) Then I told her, "The Japanese government has already paid \$300 million in cash and tendered \$200 million in loans to South Korea in accordance with the 1965 treaty. The South Korean government paid 300,000 won out of that amount to victims' survivors. Why demand further compensation from the Japanese government, especially at this late date?"

Her strange reply was: "The 1965 treaty was imposed on the weak (South Korea) by the strong (Japan). We don't care if a thousand treaties were signed. We won't recognize them."

Then I said I'd heard that her daughter was married to an *Asahi Shimbun* reporter. "Yes, that's true," she replied.

To make sure I had the correct information, I asked, "Is his name Uemura?" "Yes." Now I had the information I needed, straight from the horse's mouth.

### **Criminalization of the Japanese military**

The next task on my agenda was to interview Kim Hak-sun, the former comfort woman who had come forward. I wasn't able to do that, unfortunately, because she had been hospitalized. Instead, I managed to track down and meet with a Korean resident of Japan, a woman whom I'll call "Ms. X"; she had arranged for Kim to appear on Japanese television programs, and acted as her interpreter.

Ms. X had come to know Kim very well after interpreting for her a number of times. She had learned that Kim had not been abducted by the Japanese military, but had been sold to a kisaeng house because her family was so poor.

Having discovered that the truth was quite different from the fiction preferred by television commentators, etc., who were determined to portray the Japanese military as a band of demoniacal criminals, Ms. X had begun to realize that something was terribly wrong. I believe that is why she told someone like me, who had come from Japan on a fact-finding mission, Kim Hak-sun's true story.

She said that once she had learned the truth, she had a quiet conversation with Kim when there were no reporters around.

"Halmoni (grandma), you were sold to a kisaeng house, weren't you?"

"Yes, I was."

“Then why in the world did you come forward?”

“I was so lonely. No one ever came to see me. Then one day I saw a television program about people who were forced to work during the war and how they were going to go to court. I thought maybe that had something to do with me, so I made a phone call.”

In August 1991, Kim Hak-sun was the first former comfort woman to come forward. At that time, as already described, *Asahi Shimbun* gave the event a huge amount of coverage: “A comfort woman comes forward for the first time ever.” This was a scoop for *Asahi*, which wrote about the event before even Korean newspapers got wind of it. The author of the article was, needless to say, Uemura Takashi, son-in-law of the woman whose organization was contacted by Kim Hak-sun. He was bound to get the scoop.

The article Uemura produced, as mentioned earlier, has a very shocking beginning.

During the Sino-Japanese War and World War II, Korean women were told they would be joining female volunteer corps, but were instead transported to battle zones and forced to provide sex services to Japanese military personnel. It has come to light that one of these so-called “comfort women” lives in Seoul. The Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (...) interviewed the woman ...<sup>19</sup>

Nowhere here will you find the most critical part of her story: that her family was so poor she was sold to a kisaeng house. Without this information, readers would never see the true picture.

Interestingly, the portion of the article that mentions the female volunteer corps (“Korean women were told they would be joining Female Volunteer Corps, but were instead transported to battle zones”) is the same language used in the “supplementary material” supplied by *Asahi Shimbun* in connection with the document provided by Prof. Yoshimi. The first glimpse the Japanese reading public got of Kim Hak-sun was the portrait Uemura Takashi painted of her, which closely resembled Yoshida Seiji’s confession: the victim of abduction.

On December 25, 1991, *Asahi Shimbun* carried another article under the headline “Former Comfort Woman Kim Hak-sun Institutes Suit Against the Japanese Government: Seeks Compensation for a Stolen Youth.” It contained a partial transcription of Uemura’s interview with Kim, where she says, “I heard I could make a lot of money. Someone working in my neighborhood told me. He didn’t say what type of work was involved. I accepted the offer, and so did a friend who lived nearby. It was the spring of 1939, and I was 17.” Still no mention of being sold to a kisaeng house.

Did Kim Hak-sun fail to mention the kisaeng house when she first came forward? If so, then the information in Uemura’s article was erroneous. But it would be unfair to describe it as malicious fabrication.

The truth quickly emerged. After doing some checking, I learned that on August 14, shortly after Uemura’s article appeared, Kim Hak-sun held a press conference for Korean newspaper

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<sup>19</sup> *Asahi Shimbun*, 11 August 1991.

reporters. I looked for the articles and discovered that even *Hankyoreh*, South Korea's most left-leaning daily, carried one about Kim.

No longer able to make ends meet, my mother sold me to a kisaeng house owner in Pyongyang when I was 14. After living there for three years, I thought I had gotten my first job. But the place I was taken by the kisaeng house owner who had adopted me was a division of the Japanese Army in North China. There were more than 300 soldiers there. First I was sold for ¥40, then trained to be an entertainer for a few years, and after that I went to a place where Japanese soldiers were stationed.<sup>20</sup>

It was the same story she had told from the very beginning, the one I read on the petition for the lawsuit. Every time she told it — the first time she spoke out, on the petition, and in the *Hoseki* interview — it was the same: Kim Hak-sun had been sold to a kisaeng house.

### ***Asahi Shimbun's* malicious fabrication**

Uemura's article in the December 25 edition of *Asahi Shimbun* begins: "I was present when the lawyers interviewed the former comfort woman, so I heard her story in detail. Here are excerpts from the tape-recorded description of her stolen youth."

Not only in his August article, but also in the December piece, Uemura deliberately omitted important information from Kim Hak-sun's account: the part about being sold to a kisaeng house. At that time, Uemura worked on the city desk at the Osaka office of *Asahi Shimbun*. Apparently, he had gone to Korea as an exchange student, where he was studying the language. There he met Yang Sun-in's daughter, whom he later married. This means that he reads and speaks Korean. It is hard to believe that Kim Hak-sun omitted the part of her story relating to having being sold only when she spoke to him, i.e., *Asahi Shimbun*.

That part of Kim's story can also be found in the petition for the lawsuit. So, if Uemura was present when Takagi and the other attorneys met with Kim, she would certainly have told them about it. Uemura must have known about it. I can only assume that he left it out because it didn't fit in with the scenario he had concocted. He was afraid to write the truth, because then his whole drama about official coercion, which was what *Asahi Shimbun* wanted to publicize, would have crumbled.

*Asahi Shimbun's* current position is that Prime Minister Abe should stop dithering about whether there was coercion in the narrow sense or in the broad sense. If he's going to apologize, then he should apologize, and properly. Actually, the newspaper thought that the story wasn't worth printing unless they could make a case for coercion in the narrow sense of the word (i.e., abduction by military or government authorities). For that reason, the editors deliberately dropped the part about Kim's mother selling her for ¥40.

Recently, a television program claiming that you'll lose weight if you eat fermented soybeans was canceled and the television network that broadcast it was expelled from Minporen (National Association of Commercial Broadcasters) for misinforming the public. But *Asahi Shimbun's* sins are far, far more grievous.

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<sup>20</sup> *The Hankyoreh*, 15 August 1991.

When an Asahi reporter claimed he had found graffiti carved in coral and was later found to have staged the incident, the president of *Asahi Shimbun* resigned. But Uemura's offense was twice as reprehensible, since he lied not only to get a scoop, but also to get a lawsuit instituted by his mother-in-law off on a good footing. Their deliberate dissemination of lies has had serious consequences, worsening not only relations between Japan and South Korea, but also between Japan and the U.S.

Since 1992, I have been spreading the word about this incident every chance I get: in magazine articles, books, and in televised debates and public speeches, naming names every single time. Still, *Asahi Shimbun* has yet to issue a rebuttal, a correction or an apology; nor has the newspaper reprimanded Mr. Uemura. Far from it, it appointed him Seoul correspondent, and assigned him to write articles on Korean problems. This is inexcusable behavior.

Another individual whose conduct has been reprehensible is Takagi Ken'ichi, the attorney. We assume he read the petition, so he must have known Kim Hak-sun's sad story: the family was so poor her mother had to sell her for ¥40. If he were a reputable lawyer, he would have explained things to her: "You don't have a case. By telling your story, you risk being humiliated a second time."

As the first former comfort woman to come forward, Kim Hak-sun became a pawn in the anti-Japan campaign waged by Takagi and his accomplices. She was also used by Uemura and the *Asahi Shimbun*. When I and other Korea specialists exposed her true past, she became expendable. After I wrote about the portion of her story that Uemura concealed in *Bungei Shunju*, Korean scholars conducted an inquiry. She told them a new tale, which wasn't included in the petition. This resulted in closer scrutiny of her past; she was now trapped in a vicious cycle. It's hard to believe that Takagi Ken'ichi cared the least bit about her human rights.

### **Child comfort women?**

Now I'd like to return to the investigation I conducted in February 1992. On January 14 of that year, two days before Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi was to visit Korea, articles about the Japanese rounding up elementary school students to serve in volunteer corps, and editorials about forcing even elementary school-aged girls to become sex slaves appeared in Korean newspapers, fomenting resentment against Japan.

Did the authors actually verify the existence of 12-year-old comfort women? I located the person who wrote the first article about elementary school students and the volunteer corps, and met with him. His name is Kim Yong-soo, and he works for Rengo News Agency. He said he had been following this problem for quite some time.

As described earlier, in South Korea there is a misunderstanding about the wartime volunteer corps. They have been mistaken for comfort women; there was no connection. Kim knew that, but he wrote only that 12-year-olds were drafted into volunteer corps. He made no effort to explain. He didn't claim that they had been forced to serve as comfort women. But the editorial in the *Dong-a Ilbo*, a Korean daily, which appeared not long after the Kim article,

stated that “even 12-year old schoolgirls were mobilized to serve as sex slaves in war zones.” Presented as unassailable fact, this “information” infuriated many Koreans right before Prime Minister Miyazawa’s visit.

Volunteer corps were, more accurately, volunteer labor corps, which had nothing whatsoever to do with comfort women. Members were not transported to brothels, but to munitions factories in Toyama Prefecture. According to my research, in 1944, Ikeda Masae, a Japanese teacher at the Hozan National School (an elementary school) in Keijo (today Seoul), sent six of her sixth-grade students to work in a munitions factory in Toyama as members of a volunteer corps. In August 1945, the war ended; in December, Ms. Ikeda returned to Japan. By that time, all but one of her students had returned to Korea. Ms. Ikeda never forgot the girl, and after retiring from her teaching position in Japan, went to look for her. Her search ended happily in 1991, when she found the student. She learned that having returned safely to South Korea, the girl had headed straight for her home village without stopping at the school to announce her return.

Since Kim Yong-soo had intended to write an article describing this chain of events, he continued to gather information. He observed that a former comfort woman had come forward and that a document uncovered by Prof. Yoshimi had been given wide coverage in Japan. Then he wrote an article stating that elementary school children had been drafted into volunteer corps.

As I stated earlier, Kim did not explain that these girls were being sent to work in a factory in Toyama, not a brothel. He knew (or perhaps hoped) that his article would be misinterpreted.

I asked him directly: “Why did you write that article? You knew that those 12-year-old girls never became comfort women. In Korea, your article served as the basis for others asserting that 12-year-old Korean girls were forced to become sex slaves in battle zones. Maybe your article, and your article alone, contained no inaccuracies, but you wrote it knowing full well that it would be misinterpreted. How could you do such a thing?”

Kim’s reply: “Yes, I knew that those six children weren’t comfort women, but I’ve heard stories in Korea about children who were drafted into volunteer corps and later forced to become comfort women. So I thought that other elementary schoolgirls might have been forced to become comfort women. That’s why I didn’t bother to write that these six were members of volunteer labor corps, and not comfort women.”

His excuse was pathetic, but at least I was able to ascertain that there was no proof to back up the accusations that followed his article.

To this day, none of the sources of the rumor that 12-year-old girls were forced to serve as comfort women (Kim’s article, the newspapers, television networks, etc.) has stated that schoolgirls were mobilized to work in munitions factories, not to serve as comfort women. Anti-Japanese sentiment has continued to worsen. Here is an excerpt from one of the editorials; this one appeared in *Dong-a Ilbo* in early 1992.

Twelve-year-old “volunteer corps” members

The crimes committed by the Japanese empire were so repugnant and barbarian that it is difficult to believe they were perpetrated by human beings. It is true that they were committed during the conduct of a war waged by a militaristic government, but still, we find it nearly impossible to believe that the Japanese would go to such cruel, inhuman lengths to commit these brutal crimes.

We have been struggling to comprehend, even vaguely, the pain and suffering the members of those “volunteer corps” endured when they were brutally abducted and forced to provide sex services to the Japanese military. However, we find it impossible to control the anger that consumes us once again at the news that even 12-year-old elementary school students were mobilized and used as sexual commodities in war zones.

(...)

It is shocking to learn that before liberation,<sup>21</sup> six students in Sixth Grade Class No. 2 (an all-girl class) of the Hozan National School in Seoul (then a public elementary school affiliated with Keijo Province) were abducted and forced to join a girls’ volunteer corps. Five of them were only 12 years old at the time. It is common knowledge that 15-year-old girls were mobilized for those volunteer corps, but we have learned that even 12-year-old girls were abducted.

A Japanese teacher named Ikeda (female, now 68 years old), then employed by said school, sent the students off to a volunteer corps, which she called a “volunteer labor corps.” Ikeda persuaded the girls to go by telling them and their parents that, as subjects of the Japanese empire, they were obligated to join volunteer labor corps.

However, that was a bald-faced lie. We now know from testimony provided by various individuals that after the girls were mobilized under the volunteer labor corps pretext, they were instead assigned to brothels. Ikeda says she felt so guilty that she never married, and could never look at the sky in the direction of Korea. This is proof that she knew what the volunteer labor corps really were.

(...)

We don’t know how many young girls were taken from their parents and forced to join volunteer corps. Even some young mothers were beaten and abducted, their infants torn from their breasts. We estimate that 80,000-200,000 people were mobilized to serve as comfort women.

(...)

We do not wish to dwell on the volunteer corps issue, which has caused us great disgrace. We should persuade Japan to seek forgiveness for these brutal acts by making amends in the spirit of humanitarianism.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Here “liberation” means liberation from Japanese colonial rule.

<sup>22</sup> *Dong-a Ilbo*, 15 January 1992.

After my second reading of this tirade, I was practically groaning. Images of 12-year-old girls and new mothers being abducted and forced to become comfort women in war zones, where they “were used as sexual commodities,” had become imprinted in the minds of a great many Koreans. Subsequently, they made their way, practically unaltered, into the educational arena and into dramas shown on television. The conventional wisdom in South Korea about the comfort women, especially among those who never experienced colonialism, is virtually identical to the scenarios described in this editorial.

### **Another bombshell: lawsuit instigated by Japanese**

The more research I did, the clearer it became that there had been absolutely no official coercion of comfort women. I set out to discover the motivation for the lawsuit, and ran into yet another instance of chicanery.

During my investigation I went to Oita Prefecture to interview a woman named Aoyagi Atsuko. The wife of a physician, Aoyagi champions a Korean-Japanese anti-discrimination activist named Song Tu-hea. Aoyagi teamed up with Song to institute a lawsuit against the Japanese government demanding an apology and compensation. I later met with her puppet master Song, too, in Tokyo. From those interviews, I gleaned the following facts.

The first lawsuit of this sort involved Koreans residing in Sakhalin. It too was instigated by Song Tu-hea. Quite the eccentric, Song Tu-hea uses a bizarre logic, which prompts him to emit utterances like “the Koreans in Sakhalin and the Koreans in Japan, including me, all possess Japanese citizenship, even today.” Apparently he didn’t want to use lawyers, but the court wouldn’t accept the documents he submitted. Enter Takagi Ken’ichi, the attorney.

In 1975, Takagi and his colleagues sidelined Song, and prepared the required documents. They then instituted suit against the Japanese government, demanding an apology and compensation because “Japan bears responsibility for the inability of Koreans in Sakhalin to return to South Korea.”

That lawsuit was adjudged to be without merit. After its defeat, Japan was not involved in any way with the South Koreans’ tragic postwar fate. Sakhalin was occupied by Soviet troops, who sided with North Korea and, therefore, refused to allow Koreans to return to South Korea. The court ruled that the lawsuit was groundless. But the attitude that anything is fair game if it makes Japan look bad, and that it’s perfectly all right to twist the facts, if necessary, is the specialty of Japan-hating Japanese like Takagi and company.

But between the time the suit was instituted and into the 1980s, the Soviet Union began granting temporary exit visas so Koreans could travel to Japan. Reunions took place, and they included family members who had traveled from South Korea. The Japanese government funded these reunions, for humanitarian reasons. South Koreans in Sakhalin seemed to have reasons to be hopeful.<sup>23</sup> After his Sakhalin court case was hijacked by Takagi, Song looked to South Korea as a source of plaintiffs.

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<sup>23</sup> For details, see Arai Sawako, *Saharin no Kankokujin wa naze kaerenakatta no ka* (Why South Koreans on Sakhalin couldn’t return home) (Tokyo: Soshisha, 1997).



The Song-Aoyagi group placed an advertisement in the February 19, 1989 issue of the now defunct left-wing magazine *Asahi Journal* that read, in part: “Japan must issue a formal apology to North and South Koreans.” The advertisement appeared 14 more times, every other week, until December.

On January 19, 1989, Aoyagi made a three-day trip to South Korea, armed with a Korean translation of the *Asahi Journal* ad. The purpose of her trip was to find plaintiffs for a lawsuit against the Japanese government demanding an apology and compensation. She left her literature with various media organizations, but was unable to locate any victims.

An acquaintance who works at a branch office of a Japanese daily in South Korea told me that Aoyagi visited his office during her 1989 trip, and said she was looking for plaintiffs. Imagine a Japanese woman going around handing out flyers in South Korea, and urging people to sue the Japanese government. The more I learned about her activities, the more dubious I became.

Several weeks after she returned to Oita, Aoyagi received a telephone call from South Korea. It was Yang Sun-in, the mother-in-law of *Asahi Shimbun* reporter Uemura Takashi. Yang said she represented a group called Association for the Pacific War Victims, and wanted to be a plaintiff in Aoyagi’s lawsuit.

In March 1990, Aoyagi visited Korea a second time. Awaiting her arrival were approximately 1,000 members of the Association for the Pacific War Victims, who had gathered in the auditorium of the *Hankuk Ilbo* Building near the Japanese Embassy for a “Briefing on a Lawsuit Seeking a Formal Apology and Compensation from Japan.” Aoyagi told me that her speech to the Association for the Pacific War Victims had gone something like this:

I am just an ordinary housewife and the mother of three children. When I met Song Tu-hea and the members of his group, I realized that I could wait no longer for Japan to do the right thing. I decided to make preparations for a lawsuit. No decent human being could possibly forgive what Japan has done, including the annexation of Korea for 36 years. It makes me especially angry that Japan has shirked its postwar responsibilities.

We decided that the most effective method to use, of those available to us, would be a lawsuit. We are now preparing for the court proceedings. At the trial, we will ask for an official apology and compensation from Japan. I’d like to explain the court proceedings briefly. Court costs vary according to the amount of compensation demanded. Since it is expensive to transport witnesses to Japan, we’d like to start out with 10 plaintiffs. But to make it clear that there are many more plaintiffs standing behind these 10 people, I’d like to have as many powers of attorney as possible. We have raised four million yen in Japan to cover court costs. We plan to begin the court proceedings with 10 plaintiffs and a large number of powers of attorney.

Surely the Koreans in the audience reacted positively to this Japanese woman, who had journeyed to South Korea, condemned her own country’s government and exhorted all in attendance to join her in a lawsuit demanding an official apology and compensation, all expenses paid. Then Aoyagi suggested staging a demonstration in front of the Japanese Embassy, just a few steps away. The demonstration, the first of its kind, took place that day. Since then, there have been demonstrations demanding compensation every Wednesday in front of the Japanese Embassy, but it was Aoyagi who organized the very first one.

Inspired by Aoyagi's exhortations, the Association for the Pacific War Victims began to act in earnest. In May 1990, the group held a two-week-long sit-in in front of the Japanese Embassy. In June and July, they marched from the Japanese Consulate in Pusan to the Japanese Embassy in Seoul carrying photographs of victims hanging from their necks. Then, on October 29, 22 South Koreans appeared in Tokyo District Court to file their lawsuit against the Japanese government, the bulk of their paperwork having been done by Aoyagi and her accomplices.

The plaintiffs in this case were the survivors of Koreans who had been drafted into the Japanese Army or mobilized as workers, and were killed on the battlefield or elsewhere. No former comfort women were involved in this action.

But Song Tu-hea and Aoyagi hadn't used an attorney then, either. As a result, they did not succeed in bringing the lawsuit to trial.

In August 1991, when the first former comfort woman came forward, the Association for the Pacific War Victims bid Aoyagi farewell, and together with attorney Takagi and a group including journalist Usuki Keiko, began preparing for a new lawsuit. This is the case described earlier (Kim Hak-sun was the lead plaintiff).

By rights, any controversy over compensation should have been resolved when the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea was concluded in 1965. There were no demonstrations in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul until the first was fomented by the Association for the Pacific War Victims and Aoyagi.

But when someone came from Japan and told them they could sue, when someone told them they might be able to get more money, and that all their expenses would be paid in Japan, that's when the movement gained real momentum.

### **Compensation of individual victims at discretion of ROK government**

How did the Association for the Pacific War Victims come to be established? In accordance with the 1965 treaty, Japan paid \$300 million in cash and tendered \$200 million in loans to Korea (the property claim agreement). Since Japan had only \$18 billion in foreign currency reserves in 1965, an expenditure of \$500 million would have been a hardship. That amount was paid in installments over 10 years between 1966 and 1975. At the time, South Korea had \$130 million in foreign currency reserves, far less than the nation's trade deficit (\$290 million). Therefore, \$500 million was very significant to the Korean economy.

The Park Chung-hee administration earmarked the funds received from Japan as follows: (1) All citizens must benefit equally, (2) the funds must be applied so as to increase national income, (3) decisions to distribute funds must be made in accordance with Korean leadership initiative, be they applied to infrastructure, raw materials or machinery, and (4) the funds

must be invested in major enterprises that can be passed on to our children and grandchildren.<sup>24</sup>

Based on the view that investment in production would result in increased national income, plans were made to use the funds for national construction projects: dams, steel plants and roads were built.

According to Korean government estimates, the funds from Japan represented a contribution of 19.3% on average, between 1966 and 1975, to South Korean economic growth. In the postwar world, developing countries received a tremendous amount of financial aid from advanced nations. But few nations used those funds as effectively as the Park Chung-hee government.

The matter of compensating individuals was put off until later. Between May 1971 and March 1972, private claims against Japan were filed. The Association for the Pacific War Victims was formed during this period. In 1974, the Law Concerning Private Compensation Claims Against Japan was enacted. Beginning in 1975, 300,000 won was paid to each of 9,546 direct descendants of “persons who lost their lives as a result of having been conscripted as military personnel, civilian workers for the military or laborers prior to August 15, 1945.”<sup>25</sup>

The Association for the Pacific War Victims came into being in 1972; its *raison d’être* was to petition the Korean government for more money, since 300,000 won was insufficient. The organization should have asked the South Korean government for more money, since Japan had already transferred the funds, and there was no reason for further Japanese involvement.

Furthermore, the Korean government compensated only those who were mobilized to serve as soldiers, military workers or laborers and died while performing those services, as described earlier. Individuals who were wounded or injured received nothing.

I can certainly empathize with the petitioners. But if the Japanese government were to pay the same amount of compensation to Korean survivors as to Japanese survivors, as Japanese Japan-haters would have it, what would happen?

The South Korean government spent some of the funds received from Japan on programs intended to support independence activists and their survivors. But South Korea is now an independent nation; it must attempt to achieve a balance between compensation to survivors of those who were forced to help with Japan’s war effort when Korea was a Japanese colony, and survivors of popular heroes who died fighting for independence. Also to be factored in is compensation to survivors of Korean military personnel killed in action protecting their nation against invaders from North Korea, after independence.

The basis of comparison should be not the level of military pensions in Japan, but the balance with other survivors in South Korea. Again, it is up to the South Korean government to

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<sup>24</sup> *White Paper on Agreement on the Settlement of Problems Concerning Property and Claims, and Economic Cooperation between Japan and Republic of Korea*, Economic Planning Board, Republic of Korea, 1976.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

decide to whom and how much of the funds received from Japan should go to Koreans who were mobilized for the Japanese war effort.

None of the Korean survivors had been contemplating an attempt to extract more money from Japan. After all, Japan had paid an amount equivalent to one-third of its foreign currency reserves. And since Park Chung-hee put the money to good use, it contributed greatly to South Korean economic growth.

But more than 20 years after diplomatic relations were normalized (14 years after the South Korean government began paying compensation to individuals), a Japanese woman appears on the scene, out of the blue. She hands out flyers, and goes around telling people, “We’ve raised ¥4 million, so let’s go to court and extract damages from the Japanese government on an individual basis.” Then she holds a briefing, followed by an anti-Japanese demonstration.

### **Why is the Japanese government paralyzed?**

Now I’d like to return to the research I conducted for my article in the February 1992 issue of *Bungei Shunju*. After visiting South Korea and Oita, I tackled the Northeast Asia Division of the Japanese Foreign Ministry. The civil servants there repeatedly refused to talk to me, but with my deadline looming, I asked again for a briefing, and someone finally agreed to see me. The first thing I needed to know was why Prime Minister Miyazawa apologized in South Korea.

“Did Mr. Miyazawa acknowledge that there had been coercion or ‘slave hunts’ on the part of military or government authorities when he apologized? Or did he say, ‘At the time, there was a district of Japan called Yoshiwara, where many Japanese women worked. They had been sold into prostitution because their families were so poor.’ Did he say that was sorry for the suffering they had experienced when he apologized? Which was it? If the latter, then why doesn’t the Japanese government apologize to the Japanese women who worked in Yoshiwara?”

The bureaucrat’s shocking reply was, “I’ll have to check on that, but it’s a fact that people were taken away and had horrible experiences.”

I asked, “What is your opinion of Yoshida Seiji’s testimony about having hunted for comfort women under military orders?”

“I can’t comment with certainty, but it’s hard to believe that someone who has confessed to a crime would lie about that.”

So the Foreign Ministry didn’t possess any proof of official coercion, either.

The more I investigated, the more convinced I became that no one had proved that there was systematic coercion. But it seemed as though all of Japan had accepted that premise. I felt totally isolated.

Several days later, holed up in a hotel, I worked night and day finishing up the article. All that time, there was a nagging thought in the back of my mind: Why am I, a private citizen,

using a private publishing company's money and a considerable supply of my energy to go to South Korea, interview everyone I possibly can, and gather evidence to clear Japan's name? The Japanese government should be doing this!

Was there actually official coercion? If so, then it would have been in violation of international law. Japan would be obligated to apologize.

When Japan annexed Korea, a sincere effort was made to unite the two countries. Koreans were exhorted to become loyal subjects of Japan's Emperor — to become Japanese. Even in the context of the value system of the time, abducting Korean women to provide sex services to the Japanese military would have been betraying the Koreans. It would have been a state crime — an unforgivable state crime. And certainly, some sort of compensation would have been warranted.

My opinion on this subject has not changed at all. But I was shocked that the Japanese government had apologized without benefit of an investigation.

#### **Four proposals in 1992 article**

There is not one civil servant who will protect Japan's honor. The Defense Agency (now Defense Ministry) and Self-Defense Forces can protect Japan's sovereignty in the event of an armed attack. But there is no government office, there are no civil servants, to defend Japan's honor in the face of a scurrilous, indirect attack, i.e., an attack on Japan's honor, by conducting an investigation and countering the attack effectively.

Such matters should be within the purview of the Foreign Ministry. As described previously, that entity is planning to launch a fact-finding investigation. But what is the ministry's reason for waiting until now, after lies about the comfort women have spread all over the world, and Japan is being condemned from all quarters? I am even more outraged that it forced a prime minister to apologize.

My essay, entitled "Behind the Comfort Women Controversy," appeared in the March 10, 1992 issue of *Bungei Shunju*. I am glad that I was able to make a difference at a time when the conventional wisdom in Japan was that comfort women were victims of official coercion, and the discussion had turned to how the victims should be compensated.

My essay jump-started a huge debate focusing on official coercion. Before I trace the path of that debate, there's another point I would like to make: we must not do anything that would result in the abrogation of the treaty signed with Korea in 1965 or destroy the foundation of Japan-South Korea relations, built with great effort on the part of both nations over the years since then.

Although the two nations had already settled their past differences, a debate began, not only in the South Korean mass media, but in Korean government circles, over whether the Japanese government should compensate former comfort women. It has not subsided. In a speech delivered in March 2005, President Roh Moo-hyun said that "we should delve into the past, and if we discover that apologies are needed, they should be made from the heart, and compensation should be paid, if justified." More recently, the situation has deteriorated so

much that the U.S. Congress debated a resolution demanding that the Japanese government issue a formal apology to the former comfort women.

In my essay, I offered four proposals to be adopted for the sake of friendship between Japan and South Korea.

1. The issue of compensation was resolved when the treaty between Japan and Korea and its ancillary agreements were concluded in 1965. Care should be taken to avoid abrogating these pacts, as they form the foundation of Japan-South Korea relations.
2. Both Japan and Korea should make an effort to explain to their citizens the terms of the 1965 treaty, how much compensation was paid to Korea, and how it was decided to whom compensation would be paid. Then they should publicize information about how the funds were used. The media of both nations should publicize this information.
3. The Japanese government should discontinue its habit of apologizing every time Japan is criticized. Instead, it should review the colonial era from Japan's perspective.
4. The South Korean government should establish programs that will provide humanitarian aid to former comfort women. Japan should cooperate with South Korean efforts, on humanitarian grounds.

As for my second proposal, in August 1992, by way of making a personal contribution, I devoted 28 pages of my first book, *The Mountain of Misconceptions Separating Japan and Korea*, which dealt with the comfort women controversy, to a Japanese translation of the salient portions of the White Paper on the Japan-ROK Property Claim Agreement issued by the Korean government in 1975.

My essay did provoke a reaction in some circles. Older people who lived through the colonial era said that there was no official coercion; the women were sold into prostitution due to poverty. Their statements, however, were not carried by the mass media. As a result, an increasing number of discerning Japanese have suddenly developed a dislike for South Korea.

Also, the editorial division of *Gendai Koria* received numerous telephone calls and letters from Japanese saying they felt like assaulting Koreans, or that they wanted Korean Japanese to be expelled from Japan, or that they wanted to sever diplomatic relations with South Korea. Some of the older people were furious: "How can anyone equate volunteer corps with the comfort women?"

Here is one person's comment: "At that time, the standard of living was low in Japan, too. I'm not going to claim that everything was wonderful during the colonial area. There was discrimination against the Koreans. Some of them suffered terribly. But there was absolutely no connection between the volunteer labor corps and the comfort women. Nor was there any coercion of the comfort women."

Some periodicals carried statements from women commentators Sone Ayako and Kamisaka Fuyuko, both conversant with social issues, to the effect that no proof of official coercion has been presented. Prostitutes were licensed then, and it wasn't unusual for Korean or Japanese girls from poor families to be sold into prostitution.

But their opinions appeared only in a very few weeklies or monthlies, and never on television or in the newspapers. It had become taboo to print or say anything that might be construed as a criticism of the former comfort woman who had come forward.

But to shatter the taboo, a few people, myself included, continued the debate. At that point, our biggest hurdle was Yoshida Seiji's confession.

Yoshida had claimed he engaged in the abduction of women — “slave hunts,” he called them. But the more research I did, the more Yoshida's tale seemed anomalous when compared with other testimonies. Even the Foreign Ministry bureaucrat seemed to believe him: “Why would a an admitted perpetrator lie?” It seemed very likely that Yoshida was at least partly responsible for the prime minister's having to apologize, even though no one had checked his story.

## CHAPTER 3: A CONTROVERSY BUILT ON LIES

### The Cheju Island slave hunt farce

Shortly after the periodical carrying my article came out, I received a telephone call from Hata Ikuhiko, then professor of modern history at Takushoku University. Prof. Hata expressed an interest in finding out the truth about the comfort women. He told me of his plan to visit Cheju Island to find out if Yoshida's confession was true, and also mentioned that he had spoken to both attorney Takagi Ken'ichi and Yoshida on the telephone. Incidentally, Prof. Hata provided some additional information about Kim Hak-sun, the comfort woman whom I had mentioned in my article. He asked Takagi, "Couldn't you find a former comfort woman with a more convincing story?" The reply was: "Actually, the same thing occurred to me, so I went to South Korea to look for some more. The ones I found are much better."<sup>26</sup>

Normally, one would expect Takagi, as plaintiff Kim Hak-sun's attorney, to argue that she was not a victim of poverty but of abduction by Japanese authorities. But he didn't; he simply talked about new plaintiffs. Obviously, Kim Hak-sun was expendable. These people talk about human rights, but they certainly don't care about the human rights of the former comfort women, who are simply pawns in the anti-Japan movement.

At the beginning of this book, I cited a portion of Yoshida's *My War Crimes: Abduction of Koreans*. His description of a comfort woman hunt on Cheju includes details like dates and place names, and occupies about 50 pages. At the end of March 2007, Prof. Hata visited Cheju Island, where he began an investigation into Yoshida's account. He asked Yoshida to accompany him; when the latter refused, he requested an introduction to one of the other "hunters," but that was not forthcoming.

Here is the sequence of events relating to the comfort woman hunt on Cheju Island, according to Yoshida.

DATE	EVENT
05/15/1943	Yoshida, then head of the Mobilization Section, Shimonoseki Branch, Yamaguchi Prefecture Labor Service Association, receives an order from the Western District Army Headquarters (in Fukuoka) to mobilize 200 Korean women to join a female volunteer corps as comfort women in service to the Imperial Army.
05/18	Yoshida arrives on Cheju Island, accompanied by nine subordinates.
05/19	A team of 20 persons, including 10 armed soldiers attached to a local Army unit, hunts for women at village homes and at a creek where women do their laundry; the team then proceeds to a shell button factory at Seongwolpo, where they capture women.
05/20	Roundup of comfort women in a fishing village at Ongpo and at a dried-sardine processing factory.
05/21	Another roundup at a sausage factory in a village at the foot of Chimak in Shinsamen (Shinsamen Cattle-Breeding Union Factory)
05/24	Roundup of female divers near Seogwipo
Total number of women abducted: 205	

<sup>26</sup> Hata Ikuhiko, *Ianfu to senjo no sei* (The comfort women and sex in battle zones) (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1999).



During his investigation, Prof. Hata visited the sites named in Yoshida's account. He found decisive evidence in the form of an article in a local newspaper (the *Cheju Newspaper*) signed by Heo Yeong-seon and dated August 14, 1989.

Yoshida's book was published in Japan in 1983; it was translated into Korean and issued in South Korea in 1989. Heo conducted her own investigation, the results of which were, as she wrote: "The island residents dismissed the story, saying it was nonsense" and "It has created a sensation, but no one will back it up."

When he returned to Japan, Prof. Hata telephoned me excitedly. Here is a translation of the entire article:

(Headlines)

Empire of Japan "captured 205 comfort women in Cheju"

*How I Abducted Koreans ...* written by a Japanese, creates a sensation

Residents of Cheju, furious at shameless Japanese commercialism, denounce it as a hoax  
Former head of Mobilization Section, Yamaguchi Prefecture Labor Service Association, claims he abducted women at button factory in Seongwolpo, and in Ongpo and Bophwan-li

(Text)

Forty-four years after liberation, an account of the capture, during the imperial era, of 205 Cheju women destined to serve as comfort women has had a tremendous impact on this country. However, the lack of evidence to support the account has caused an even greater commotion.

The account in question is to be found in a book entitled *How I Abducted Koreans*, written by Yoshida Seiji. As the head of the Mobilization Section of the Yamaguchi Prefecture Labor Service Association, Yoshida was assigned to abduct Koreans from 1942 until Japan's defeat. The 1983 edition of the book was translated and published by Cheong-gye Research Institute's Modern History Division.<sup>27</sup>

The author describes abductions of men in Gwanju and of women on Cheju Island, in which he personally participated.

He even provides the details of the order he received, as follows:

- \$ Volunteer corps of 200 Korean women to serve as entertainers for the Imperial Army
- \$ Age: 18-29
- \$ Only healthy women accepted
- \$ Duration: One year
- \$ Remuneration: ¥30 per month
- \$ Clothing allowance: ¥20 (to be paid in advance)
- \$ Place of assignment: central China
- \$ Recruiting areas: southwestern Korea and Cheju Island
- \$ Departure date: 12:00 noon, 30 May 1943
- \$ Meeting place: Western Army, Unit 74

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<sup>27</sup> Translated by Nishioka Tsutomu.

“We caught all the young women in the tiny village, loaded them (in a truck) and drove off at full speed. When we turned onto a road that runs between rocky hills, we could see Piyangdo Island. Sailboats dotted the vast ocean, and there was a veil of mist on the horizon. (...) The building we entered served as both office and factory. Four or five men were doing clerical work there. We were welcomed by a stocky old man who said he was head of an industrial association. ‘We’re going to round up all women around 20 years old,’ I told him. ‘We’re going to search the factory and take the women away. I command you to assist us!’”<sup>28</sup>

The author has no qualms about using obscene, discriminatory language.

However, immediately after Japan’s defeat, the vice minister of the interior sent a communiqué to all prefectural governors. Subsequently, an emergency order was issued to every police station to destroy official records and other documents relating to the conscription of Koreans.

No one witnessed the abduction of 15 or 16 women at the shell-button factory on the coast of Cheju Island, or other abductions in Bophwan-li and other villages. Therefore, these accounts are extremely dubious.

Chon Oktan (85), a resident of Seongsan-li, told us, without hesitation: “It’s not true. There are only a little over 250 houses in this village. If an incident that serious, where 15 people were abducted, had taken place, everyone would have heard about it. But no one did.”

Local history specialist Kim Bong-ok, furious, said: “This is a prime example of the brutality and barbarity of the Japanese. The author writes about acts that most people would find too shameful to describe. We shouldn’t dignify what he produced by calling it a book. When it first came out in 1983, I tried to track it down for several years, but some of it is groundless. It is, of course, a totally immoral book that demonstrates the hatefulness of the Japanese. It reeks of commercialism.”

By the time Prof. Hata went to Cheju, Ms. Heo had changed jobs; she was now head of the culture desk at *Jemin Ilbo*. The first words she said to him when they met were, “Why would anyone invent a story like that?” Hata was at a loss for an answer.

He then proceeded to interview several former officers of the shell-button factory at Seongsan-po, but none of them could corroborate Yoshida’s story.

According to Yoshida, the order to conduct the comfort women hunt was transmitted down the following chain of command: Western District Army → governor of Yamaguchi Prefecture → Shimonoseki Police Department → Labor Service Association, Shimonoseki Branch → manager of the Mobilization Division. But when Hata attempted to verify the information, he was told that there was no such chain of command.

Later, exhaustive investigations conducted by historians Itakura Yoshiaki<sup>29</sup> and Uesugi Chitoshi<sup>30</sup> revealed that Yoshida’s chronology and other aspects of his story were totally implausible.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Description of the hunt for comfort women on Cheju Island in Yoshida, *op. cit.*.

<sup>29</sup> See *Shokun!*, July 1992.

When asked by Prof. Yoshimi Yoshiaki and others in May 1993 to see the journal he had kept during the war, Yoshida responded: “I can’t show it to you. If I did, someone might attack my family.” “In some cases, I changed dates and place names.” In other words, he admitted that he had stretched the truth.<sup>32</sup>

Unfortunately, Ms. Heo’s signed article in the Cheju newspaper, critical evidence in any investigation into the reliability of Yoshida’s confession, was never picked up by any of South Korea’s major dailies. In the ROK, the notion that 12-year-old schoolgirls were compelled to become comfort women has quickly taken root. A film purporting to be a docudrama shows military police descending upon a peaceful village and abducting wailing women and girls. Young teenagers are also abducted. Mothers with infants at their breasts are abducted. Koreans who see these images in dramas — Koreans who never experienced the colonial era — believe them to be genuine. We can thank Yoshida Seiji for telling lies that spread like wildfire through the ROK, and were embraced as fact by young South Koreans. There doesn’t seem to be any way to undo the damage he has done.

The truth is on our side, certainly, but how are we to publicize the fact that Yoshida’s confession is spurious? It was extremely frustrating to be unable to answer this question.

### **More lies: “Kwantung Army Recruits 20,000 comfort women”**

By around 1997, five years after Prof. Hata had conducted his investigation, it was possible to debate the comfort women issue openly, on television and in the newspapers. I will discuss the debate in detail later. By then even *Asahi Shimbun* had lost faith in Yoshida, who at long last was out of the limelight.

There was another account that attested to official coercion of comfort women. Its author was Hara Zenshiro, a former Kwantung Army staff officer. Hara claimed that he had been asked by the Government-General of Korea to recruit 8,000 comfort women in 1941, when the Japanese Army mobilized a large number of troops for maneuvers in preparation for war against the Soviet Union. His testimony is included in *Military Prostitutes*, published in 1973.<sup>33</sup> Author Senda Kako claims to have spoken to Hara in person.

The Army reluctantly abandoned the “special maneuvers,” actually preparation for war against the Soviet Union, immediately before they were to take effect. What is important here is that comfort women were to be mobilized as well as soldiers.

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<sup>30</sup> See *Shokun!* August 1992.

<sup>31</sup> For details, see Hata, *op. cit.*, Chapter 7.

<sup>32</sup> Yoshimi Yoshiaki and Kawata Fumiko, eds. *Jugun ianfu wo meguru 30 no uso to shinjitsu* (Thirty lies and truths about military comfort women) (Tokyo: Otsuki Shoten, 1997).

<sup>33</sup> Senda Kako, *Jugun ianfu: seihen, zokuhen* (Military prostitutes, vols. 1 and 2) (Tokyo: Futabasha, 1973); (Tokyo: San’ichi Shinsho, 1978) (reissue).

Major (later Lt.-Col.) Hara Zenshiro, Kwantung Army rear staff officer, estimated the sexual needs of the soldiers in the tactical forces and the amount of money they had at their disposal, as well as the physical capacity of the women who serviced them. Hara came up with the figure of 20,000 for the number of comfort women needed, and departed for Korea by plane to recruit them. From his statement we can see that at that time, i.e., 1941, the Korean peninsula was already a source of supply for comfort women. Actually, they say that only 10,000 women were recruited, but that does not change the fact that Korea was the source of supply.

I wonder what sort of comfort women, specifically, were recruited in Korea. Hara Zenshiro had retired to the southern part of Osaka City. He owned a modest home in a new development. In person, he seemed like a pleasant elderly gentleman.

I opened the conversation with the following question:

“When a new unit was formed to comply with mobilization orders, it was customary to recruit the required number of comfort women in Korea, was it not?”

“You want to know about the comfort women, I assume. I just happened to be in charge of logistics then. That’s right, I was a staff officer or, more accurately, “rear staff officer.” I belonged to the 3rd Operations Section of Kwantung Army Headquarters. But I don’t remember much about those days, though they’re mentioned quite often now.”

“So, you’re saying that comfort women were recruited in Korea for the special maneuvers. You’re sure about that. Do you know exactly how they were recruited in Korea?”

“I don’t have a clear recollection. But I think I went to the General Affairs Division of the Governor-General’s Office and asked for their assistance. I don’t know what happened after that. Personally, I made sure that my involvement ended there.”

“Then you just stated how many women you needed and asked the Governor-General’s Office to recruit them?”

“Yes, that’s how it was.”

“Then how did the Korean Governor-General’s Office, having received the request from the Army, go about recruiting comfort women? In those days, the situation being what it was, an order from the Army ... I mean a request ... well, it might as well have been an order, was law, or so I’ve heard. It couldn’t be refused or ignored.”

“I really can’t comment about that. My guess is that the Governor-General’s Office sent requests to each province. The provinces passed them on to districts, and the districts to the *men*. You probably know *men* means ‘village.’”

“So the village headman was ultimately responsible for recruiting the women, then? Were the headmen Koreans?”

“I don’t know the details.”

“I’d like to change the subject. What were the criteria you used to arrive at the estimate that 20,000 comfort women were needed to service 700,000 soldiers? You mentioned the sexual needs of the soldiers and the amount of spending money they had, as well as the physical capacity of the women who serviced them.”

“Well, they didn’t teach us such things at the Military Staff School, and all I was taught as a rear staff officer was how to replenish supplies of ammunition, provisions and fodder. So I’m at a loss to tell you how I did the calculations, and I don’t remember clearly, but it’s likely that I based my calculations on prior experience — the war against China, that is. Also, some of my colleagues said 20,000, but I don’t think they recruited more than 8,000 women.”<sup>34</sup>

Reading this conversation, one could certainly fall prey to the delusion that the Korean Governor-General’s Office supplied comfort women to the Kwantung Army. But this account crumbles under analysis. It is even possible that Senda never even met former Staff Officer Hara, and invented this conversation.

Research done by Uesugi Chitoshi, author of “Exposé of Senda Kako’s *Military Prostitutes: Invented Kwantung Army Requisition for 20,000 Comfort Women*,”<sup>35</sup> and historian Kato Masao reveals that Hara’s testimony is not credible, for the following reasons.

Kato read my article in *Bungei Shunju* and, in the spring of 1992, came to visit me at the editorial division of *Gendai Koria* (I was then editor-in-chief). Born before World War II, he began an impassioned speech, the point of which was that there had been no official coercion of comfort women. I met with him several times after that, and he began investigating the doubtful portions of Hara Zenshiro’s testimony in depth. The result was a superb essay that we published in *Gendai Koria*.<sup>36</sup>

Here is a summary of those errors.

- § Maj. Katogawa Kotaro, formerly attached to the Military Affairs Section, Military Service Bureau, Ministry of War; and Lt.-Col. Imaoka Yutaka, former staff officer of the Kwantung Army (logistics), who had control of the budget for the Kwantung Army’s special maneuvers, told Kato, independently, that there was no plan to recruit comfort women.
- § Preparations for the Kwantung Army’s special maneuvers were made amidst such secrecy that even sendoffs for new draftees had to be canceled. Therefore, an act as overt as the mobilization of comfort women would have been totally out of the question. The Army estimated that the maneuvers would last for two months. In any case, there were plenty of Korean pimps already operating in Manchuria.

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<sup>34</sup> Senda, *op. cit.* (San’ichi Shinsho reissue), pp. 103-4.

<sup>35</sup> Uesugi Chitoshi, “Senda Kako cho *Jugun ianfu* wo kiru: maboroshi no Kan tokuen jugun ianfu ni man nin chobo yosei” (Exposé of Senda Kako’s *Military prostitutes: invented Kwantung Army requisition for 20,000 comfort women*) in *Getsuyo Hyoron* (Monday review), 28 September 1992; summarized in Uesugi Chitoshi, *Kensho jugun ianfu: jugun ianfu mondai nyumon* (The truth about military prostitutes: introduction to the comfort women controversy) (Tokyo: Zenboshu, 1993).

<sup>36</sup> Kato Masao, “Senda Kako cho *Jugun ianfu* no judaina ayamari” (Serious errors in Senda Kako’s *Military prostitutes*), *Gendai Koria*, February and March, 1993.

- § In the excerpt from Senda's book quoted above, Hara Zenshiro describes his standing as staff officer in charge of logistics with the 3rd Operations Section of Kwantung Army Headquarters. However, that is incorrect. Hara was attached to the 1st Operations Section. Mr. Kato examined resources at the Archives of the National Institute for Defense Studies. Hara's military career progressed as follows: Between August 1, 1939 and October 5, 1941, he served as staff officer with the 1st Operations Section of Kwantung Army Headquarters. From October 6, 1941 to January 11, 1942, he was staff officer with the Office of the Inspector General of Transportation, Headquarters of the General Staff. From August 2, 1943 until the war ended, Hara was staff officer with the 4th Section of Kwantung Army Headquarters, where he was responsible for Manchurian policy and internal guidance. He was never attached to the 3rd Section of Kwantung Army Headquarters. It is hard to believe that he would have forgotten these details of his military career.
- § By 1992, Hara Zenshiro was no longer alive. Mr. Kato questioned Senda Kako twice by telephone in 1992 about the comfort women mobilization plan described in his book. Senda's response was: "The plan to mobilize 20,000 comfort women is mentioned in a book entitled *The Kwantung Army*, by Musashi University Professor Shimada Toshihiko, which came out in 1965, before mine did.<sup>37</sup> On p. 17, Shimada describes a plan to mobilize 20,000 comfort women. I based what I wrote on his theory." It would seem that Senda was admitting that he had never interviewed former Staff Officer Hara.
- § In *Kwantung Army*, Shimada writes: "Staff Officer Hara Zenshiro recounted an episode during his career involving making elaborate calculations to estimate the sexual needs of the soldiers, the amount of spending money they had, and the physical capacity of the women. He then flew to Korea, where he managed somehow to recruit 10,000 (not the 20,000 planned) Korean women. He transported them to the plains of northern Manchuria, where facilities were built for them, and they began working." It is likely that Senda constructed his "interview" with Hara from this passage.
- § Then what is the basis for the description in *The Kwantung Army*? Since Prof. Shimada too was deceased by then, there is no way to obtain an unimpeachable answer to this question. Therefore, we must conclude that Senda's theory about a plan to recruit 20,000 comfort women is erroneous.<sup>38</sup>

### **Only men rounded up**

After the article stating that the claim that comfort women were abducted is unsupported appeared in the April 1992 issue of *Bungei Shunju*, Messrs. Hata Ikuhiko and Kato Masao

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<sup>37</sup> Shimada Toshihiko, *Kanto gun* (Kwantung Army) (Tokyo: Chuko Shinsho, 1965); reissued in 1965 by Kodansha).

<sup>38</sup> In the previously cited *Ianfu to senjo no sei* (The comfort women and sex in battle zones), Hata Ikuhiko's opinion, based on a journal kept by former Sgt. Murakami Sadao, aide to Staff Officer Hara (and published in 1975) and the testimonies of former military police officers, is that comfort stations were established for the exclusive use of the military during the Kwantung Army's special maneuvers. However, the Korean prostitutes were taken there by their pimps, not abducted by authorities.

began their analyses of the testimonies of Yoshida Seiji and Hara Zenshiro. I participated enthusiastically in these investigations as editor-in-chief of *Gendai Koria*. No evidence was found to corroborate accusations of abductions.

In fact, after my article appeared, four or five officers of the South Korean group known as Association for the Pacific War Victims and some of their Japanese supporters contacted me requesting a meeting. They were in Japan in connection with a court proceeding.

I thought they might assault me, but agreed to meet them at a coffee shop in Tokyo. By February 1992, the victims' group had splintered into three organizations. When Ms. Aoyagi was recruiting plaintiffs, as described earlier, there was only one organization: the Association for the Pacific War Victims.

The Association parted ways with Ms. Aoyagi and her group due to various differences (including disagreement about how to proceed with the lawsuit), choosing instead to cast its lot with attorney Takagi Ken'ichi. Yang Sun-in, mother-in-law of reporter Uemura Takashi, was executive director of the Association. This is the same group that former comfort woman Kim Hak-sun approached. As I mentioned earlier, some people remained with Ms. Aoyagi and her lawsuit.

There was a third victims' group led by Kim Gyeong-seok. When he was working for a Japanese company as a laborer during the war, Kim was assaulted by company overseers, sustaining injuries that left him disabled. His group has instituted suit against Japanese corporations.

It was members of this third group, Kim's group, who had asked me to meet with them. They told me that the Association had split again, and the chairman and accountant had been expelled. Uemura's mother-in-law, Yang Sun-in, was the new chair. The ousted chairperson was now working under Kim Gyeong-seok, moving forward with a new campaign.

Mr. Kim said that the Japanese media had not printed a word about the fragmentation of the Association; their focus was on former comfort women and Yang Sun-in. He told me that I was the only person who had described the situation accurately (that there were now three victims' groups), and thanked me.

Pointing to the issue of *Bungei Shunju* that he had brought with him, Mr. Kim said, "Almost everything in this is correct. Could you please sign it for me?" Then, turning more serious, he changed the subject.

"Yoshida Seiji says he went on comfort women hunts, but he's a liar. There weren't any roundups or abductions."

"How can you be so sure?"

"Along with my older brother, I was conscripted to work in a munitions factory in Japan. We are both victims, so we know what things were like then. There were roundups of male laborers, but not of women, as Yoshida claims."

“As you wrote in your article, Kim Hak-sun, the former comfort woman who came forward, wasn’t abducted. She was sold to a kisaeng house because she was poor. I saw her the other day in South Korea, and told her, “You have a nerve coming forward!”

“Why?”

“The Japanese government has an information bureau, the Cabinet Research and Intelligence Office, right? I suspect that that office is behind the comfort women controversy. I think the Cabinet Research and Intelligence Office arranged for former kisaeng Kim Hak-sun to come forward and file a lawsuit in Japan, and for that guy Yoshida to make up his story.”

“I think the plan was to spread these lies as widely as possible. Then they have someone like you write an article exposing the lies. The objective of these plots is to convince everyone that laborers like us were never conscripted so they won’t have to pay us compensation. We were mobilized because of a government order based on the Mobilization Act and we were injured, but we’ve never received any compensation. We’re not trying to advertise a lie. But if we’re lumped together with the comfort women and their claims, which are baseless, we may not get any compensation. Liars like Yoshida and Kim Hak-sun hurt our cause.”

As I listened to Kim, I remember feeling very strange and thinking, “If the Cabinet Research and Intelligence Office were determined to defend Japan’s honor and interests to the point of creating misinformation, then I wouldn’t have had to launch this desperate investigation into the comfort women problem!”

### **Korean pimps hold the key to this controversy**

At around the same time, several South Koreans in succession told me that there was no official coercion of comfort women.

A Korean journalist I met in Seoul told me, “I’m not writing anything more about this controversy.” When I asked him why, he said, “I’ve interviewed quite a few former comfort women. All of them are happy to talk about how horrible life was in the brothels. But most of them clam up when I ask them how they got there, or got taken there. When I press them, there always seems to be a pimp involved.”

I asked him if the pimps were Japanese. His answer: “Do you actually think Japanese would have ventured into rural Korea during annexation?” The more women he interviewed, the more obvious it became that they had been sold and that pimps were involved in the transactions.

He added, “At first, when I started interviewing people, I thought, ‘Japan really did a terrible thing.’ But the interviews helped me realize that this type of situation would have existed in any country at war.”

Then he whispered, “There’s a dark side to this problem.”

“In that case,” I thought, “why stop writing about it? Why not write an article that will correct these misunderstandings once and for all?” But at that time hostility toward Japan was at a



peak. I figured that the situation in South Korea being what it was, there was no point in making such a request, so I didn't say anything.

Dark side: Those words made a strong impression on my mind, or rather, in the pit of my stomach, and I just couldn't forget them. That may be why I named my third book of commentary *Penetrating the Darkness*.

At around the same time, Ko Jun-seok, a left-leaning South Korean intellectual residing in Japan, told Sato Katsumi, president of Japan's Modern Korea Institute. "There were no comfort women hunts by the Japanese military of the sort Yoshida describes. Some people from my village became comfort women. A relative of mine, a widow, created quite a stir when she traveled with some girls from the village to China, set up a brothel and made a pile of money. Other girls from the village went there to work, too. At that time, Cheju Island was poor. It wasn't at all unusual for girls to be sold into prostitution. Why would the military go to the trouble of rounding up comfort women? Anyway, if they had, rumors would have spread, but I never heard about any such thing."

Moreover, a former South Korean National Assembly member, whom I'll call Mr. K (a policymaker in the opposition New Democratic Party in the 1970s) tells me the same thing every time he visits me: "Japan didn't round up comfort women. Why can't the Japanese understand this? The February 26 revolt occurred because soldiers from northeastern Japan were sick of being poor and having their younger sisters sold into prostitution. Korean farming villages were even poorer then."

The late Lee Myeong-yeong, a distinguished scholar who specialized in North Korean problems, and a former professor at Sungkyunkwan University, wrote a great many books, including *The Four Kim Il-sungs*. He was my mentor, and he too told me that there was no official coercion of comfort women, adding the following information.

When occupying Soviet troops invaded, Lee Myeong-yeong was on the faculty of the Keijo Imperial University Medical School. He came from a family of physicians who practiced on the east coast of North Korea, where Japanese were fairly numerous. Lee Myeong-yeong's father and the Japanese school principal were community leaders and good friends. The principal often visited the Lee home to play *go* with the father. When the Soviets arrived, Japanese were rounded up and confined in school classrooms, men and women separately.

Then the Soviets demanded women. The single women said, "You married women have husbands, so we'll go." But the married women said, "No, you have no experience with such things. We will go." The principal's wife sent a messenger to Prof. Lee's father to apprise him of what was happening, and ask for help.

As it would happen, the Soviet commander was being treated for a venereal disease as an outpatient at Dr. Lee's hospital. He had gone to a private hospital rather than consulting his army surgeon because he was afraid his career might suffer if word got around about his condition.

Lee Myeong-yeong was an intern at that time. Assisting his father, he was painting medicine on the commander's penis.

Dr. Lee addressed the commander: “I advise you to avoid Japanese women. They don’t understand the concept of chastity. You know those obi they wear? Well, they use them as pillows when the need arises. The safest thing to do is to patronize professionals. They’re safe because they undergo medical examinations. If your men have sex with amateurs, they will all end up like you.”

“That sounds like good advice.” Most likely, the commander had raped Japanese women in Manchuria; he probably believed that he’d contracted venereal disease from them. He couldn’t bear the thought of the men in his unit being sullied by venereal disease. So he rescinded the order to take women from the school, and issued another to look for denizens of the pleasure quarters. That is how the Japanese women confined to the school were rescued.

There is another compelling story, which involves former South Korean President Lee Seoung-man (also known in the Western world as Syngman Rhee). The first president of the new republic, Lee chose as many anti-Japanese themes as anti-communist ones for his national slogans. During diplomatic negotiations with Japan, he continually brought up the injustices of Japanese annexation and demanded huge amounts of compensation. But even President Lee never mentioned comfort women during those negotiations. He knew that they existed, without a doubt. Everybody knew. But it never occurred to Lee to demand compensation from Japan for the comfort women. What he demanded was compensation for conscripts (soldiers and laborers). He believed that the Japanese government should compensate those who were forced to work for the Japanese (back pay and reparations).

Official coercion of comfort women, if it had occurred, would certainly have been mentioned at post-annexation negotiations. But since President Lee realized that poverty was the villain in this case, he didn’t broach the subject.

After being told so many times, and by reliable sources, that there was no official coercion of comfort women, I became convinced that I was hearing the truth.

### **Comfort woman saves enough to buy five houses in Tokyo**

In 1992 and 1993, the Japanese government scoured documents at government agencies to learn exactly how comfort women were recruited. Meanwhile, the media, including *Asahi Shimbun*, conducted the same type of exhaustive search for proof of coercion.

The first conclusion reached was that there was no relationship between volunteer corps, which were part of an official program, and the recruiting of comfort women.

Second, no evidence was found implicating any branch of the government in the abduction of comfort women. However, documents were found that attest to official, well-meaning government efforts intended to prevent private brokers from resorting to criminal recruiting methods, as already described.

Third, the confessions of Yoshida Seiji and Hara Zenshiro were discredited. No other testimony corroborating the coercion theory has been found.

What remained was the testimony of former comfort women who came forward in 1992. I obtained as many of those testimonies as I could and analyzed them. While doing that, I frequently was forced to ponder the inexplicable aspects of human nature.

In March 1992, I read a newspaper article about a former comfort woman named Moon Ok-ju, who had come to Japan to request refund of the monies in a wartime postal savings account. Ms. Moon was a comfort woman in Burma between 1942 and 1944. During that time, she deposited cash received from soldiers at the unit's military post office. She had lost her passbook, but she submitted a request to the Shimonoseki Post Office for a refund of ¥6,000 or 7,000.

The post office checked her story, and on May 11, 1992, found the original accounting records for military savings. Between June 1943 and September 1945, Ms. Moon had made 12 deposits, and her account had a balance of ¥26,145. Normally, the discovery of a sum of money this large would have made the news. In the 1940s, ¥5,000 would have purchased a house in Tokyo. She could have bought five houses!

But the newspapers gave the story very little coverage. Its shrillness about the comfort women controversy notwithstanding, *Asahi Shimbun* didn't even mention how much Ms. Moon had in her account.

With the payment of \$500 million to the South Korean government in accordance with the 1965 treaty, Japan had fulfilled its obligation to compensate South Korean citizens, including those who had had military savings accounts. Also in 1965, Japan enacted a law stipulating that the right of South Koreans to claim compensation for savings accounts or for any other reason expired with that expenditure.

Moreover, the South Korean government paid compensation to holders of savings accounts like Moon Ok-ju. Since she was ruled ineligible for compensation because she had lost her passbook, Ms. Moon should have been negotiating with the South Korean government. Perhaps Japan could assist her by producing a copy of the original accounts register from the military post office.

But she was having none of that. To the post office, she said, "Right of claim for individuals has not expired. When I saved that money, I was a Japanese, so give it back to me right away." Thinking her request was perfectly reasonable, she kept asking for the money. A support group of Japanese was formed for her, and her ridiculous demands were publicized by the media without comment.

Watching the reports, I realized that the comfort women controversy farce had gone as far as it could go.

To begin with, one former comfort woman claims to be the victim of official coercion and sues the Japanese government. It comes to light that during her comfort woman career, which lasted a bit more than three years, she made ¥26,000, a huge amount of money. Is this the sort of life a sex slave leads? Is this the fate of a victim of abduction?

Why didn't *Asahi Shimbun* print the information about the ¥26,000 in her bank account? This was certainly information manipulation. I suppose the newspaper couldn't bring itself to print

facts, because they contradicted the previous portrait of an unfortunate comfort woman who was abducted in a slave hunt and then raped. This is the same tactic the paper used earlier (failing to mention that Kim Hak-sun was sold to a kisaeng house). I'll return to Ms. Moon's story a bit later.

Now back to Kim Hak-sun, about whom I wrote in the *Bungei Shunju* article: she changed her story after the magazine came out. In the lawsuit complaint she submitted in December 1991, here is how she described having become a comfort woman.

Her adoptive father took her to China. They rode to Pyongyang in a truck. Then they rode for three days in a train that transported only soldiers. They changed trains many times. She remembers passing through Andong and Beijing. All she knows about her final destination is that it was in North China, Tiebizhen. They arrived at Tiebizhen at night. It was a small village. She said goodbye to her adoptive father there. She and her companions were taken to a Chinese family's house by an officer. They were led to a room and the door was locked behind them.

But when she was interviewed by South Korean scholars, beginning in July 1992, Kim said she was abducted, and violently so, by Japanese military personnel. She also added information not mentioned in her first account.

We arrived in Beijing. We ate lunch in a restaurant. When we came out, some Japanese soldiers called my stepfather over. The officer with two stars on his uniform spoke to my stepfather: "Are you Koreans?" My stepfather told him, yes, we were, and that he had brought us to China to make some money. The officer said, "If you want to make money, why don't you do it in your own country? You must be spies! Get over here!" Then he led my stepfather away.

Soldiers led me and the older girl away, separately. There was a truck at the end of the road with no cover on the back. There were about 40 or 50 people in it. They told us to get on the truck. When we said no, the people on both sides of us just picked us up and put us on the truck. After a while, the officer who had taken my stepfather away came back. Then the truck left. The officer was in the passenger seat. We were shocked and scared, so we just made ourselves small in the truck and cried.<sup>39</sup>

If this were a true account, it would certainly make the case for abductions (slave hunts). But when Kim Hak-sun spoke to Takagi Ken'ichi, she didn't say anything about having been abducted by soldiers in Beijing. Common sense tells us that she would not have omitted information from the complaint, especially information that would help win the lawsuit. In that case, we must, regrettably, assume that this change to her account was fictional, prompted by my *Bungei Shunju* article.

### **Intentionally falsified testimonies**

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<sup>39</sup> Volunteer Corps Research Group of the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, ed., *Testimonies, Part 1: Korean Women Abducted and Forced To Become Comfort Women*, written in Korean and translated by Nishioka Tsutomu.

The Japanese government conducted its own investigation and found no evidence of official coercion. Unfortunately, it had already issued an apology. South Korea is insisting that Japan acknowledge that there was coercion.

It is shameful for the elderly women to come forward and admit they were comfort women, unless they say they were coerced. They can't say, in public, that her parents sold them. This is something one keeps to oneself. As we demonstrated earlier, Kim Hak-sun changed her story. Therefore, these testimonies need to be verified. The Japanese government interviewed 16 former comfort women in South Korea from July 26-30, 1993. Attorney Fukushima Mizuho was present at the interviews, representing human rights activists. (She is currently chairwoman of the SDP (Social Democratic Party), but had not yet been elected to the Diet in 1993.

The government's comment about the testimonies given at the interviews was, "The women do not have clear recollections of portions of their stories. We are not going to press them on every little detail. We will simply accept the testimonies as given."<sup>40</sup> No attempt was made to verify the testimonies.

But at the same time, South Korean scholars were conducting their own investigation. Between July and December of 1992, they interviewed more than 40 persons. Fifteen of the scholars formed a group called Volunteer Corps Research Group, headed by Prof. Ahn Byong-jick.

Prof. Ahn (now emeritus) was on the faculty of Seoul University at the time of the investigation. He is one of the foremost authorities on modern Korean economic history, and has produced many empirical works on the subject. Prof. Ahn joined the group in June 1992; he was the practical advisor for the interviews.

When I met with Prof. Ahn in 2006, I asked him about the work the group had done in 1992. What had motivated him to join the Volunteer Corps Research Group?

"I thought that if the group consisted solely of activists, it might be difficult to conduct interviews that probed for the truth. Since I am very familiar with the methodologies of historiography, I thought I could be of help. I was also interested in learning more about the comfort women controversy. I was concerned about the fact that comfort women and the female volunteer corps had intermingled in people's minds.

"There was some opposition from the activists to my approach. I wanted the research to be done carefully so it would stand up to investigation. For that and other reasons, I withdrew from the group after *Testimonies, Part I* was released."

In June 1992, after Prof. Ahn joined the group, it began preparations for the interviews by creating separate chronologies for the comfort women and female volunteer corps, and establishing a record-keeping system for research and resources.

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<sup>40</sup> Statement of Tanaka Kotaro, councillor, Cabinet Councillors' Office on External Affairs in *Asahi Shimbun*, 05 August 1993.

At the same time, interviews of former comfort women registered with the Volunteer Corps Research Group of the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (hereafter abbreviated to Volunteer Corps Research Group) began in earnest. As of December 1992, 110 former comfort women had registered with the group. Of that number, 55 women were deceased. The group managed to locate more than 40 of the 55 who were still alive.

Prof. Ahn is a distinguished scholar, so he ensured that the verification work was done properly. He also taught other group members the proper methods to use. He spent hours making the chronologies. Since human memory is imperfect, but memories were important, it was necessary to provide context by citing an event that occurred before or after a vague memory. He could then verify (or reject) some statements by, for instance, noting that a particular system wasn't in place at a certain time. Each comfort woman was interviewed five or six times.

Between June and mid-September, the group held weekly meetings (from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.) at which the transcripts of the interviews were examined. The result of that process was *Testimonies, Part 1*.

In February 1993, when the book was released, the head of our Foreign Ministry's Northeast Asia Division happened to be in South Korea to discuss the comfort woman problem. The head of the Asia Bureau of South Korea's Foreign Ministry handed him *Testimonies, Part 1* and said, "Everything is in this book." When I heard about this, I ordered the book from South Korea right away and read it from cover to cover. First I read Prof. Ahn's preface, entitled "Thoughts on Participating in the Research for this Book." I still remember how deeply I was moved by it. Here is an excerpt.

One of the greatest difficulties encountered in analyzing our research was the fact that statements made by the witnesses frequently did not fit into historical context. It is possible that such lapses of memory occur because the witnesses are describing events that occurred nearly 50 years ago. It is also possible that witnesses omit events that they do not want to discuss, or create other events to replace them. I am also aware that the situation at the time defies present-day imaginations.

The cases that presented the most serious problems to researchers were those in which the witnesses seemed to be intentionally distorting the facts.<sup>41</sup>

I was extremely impressed that Prof. Ahn had included this last sentence in the signed preface to a collection of testimonies. He continues:

Anticipating such cases, we strived to overcome this difficulty by assigning one researcher exclusively to a witness, hoping that a rapport would develop. This approach was successful for the most part, but in some instances we had to discontinue our research on particular individuals. We told such subjects that we would reinterview them in the future.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Kankoku teishintai mondai taisaku kyogikai, teishintai kenkyukai hen (Volunteer Corps Research Group, Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan), *Shogenshu 1: kyosei de tsurete ikareta Chosenjin ianfutachi* (Testimonies, part 1: Koreans coerced into serving as comfort women), February 1993.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

Prof. Ahn and his associates interviewed more than 40 women, but were able to use the testimonies of only 19. This means that they had to discontinue interviews with more than half their subjects because “witnesses seemed to be intentionally distorting the facts,” or for other reasons.

He demonstrated considerable courage at a time when he was extremely likely to be labeled “pro-Japan” and accused of taking the side of the Japanese, especially since the Japanese government had already issued an apology. Nevertheless, Prof. Ahn behaved as a scholar should, by doing his research properly and stating the facts, even if they involved saying that witnesses had been devious.

In the next section of the preface, Prof. Ahn describes the principles governing his research. These are the very same principles that I have adhered to throughout my career.

During the early stages of the process, there were some differences among us about which approach should be taken. Later we all agreed that our guiding principle would be the exposition of the unvarnished truth. The military comfort women problem is our colonial era shame of shames. Therefore, our primary challenge lay in deciding how to address the problem. Since learning the facts was now paramount in our quest for the truth, we conducted five or six interviews with each individual.<sup>43</sup>

### **Analysis of 19 testimonies**

I read all 19 testimonies with great care, checking each one for details about how the women were transported to their destinations. I acquired 26 additional testimonies with names to them. I obtained five collections of testimonies and studied them. With the exception of the interviews conducted by Prof. Ahn’s group, all were verbatim transcripts of testimonies of former comfort women; they had never been analyzed or checked.

Among them, *Testimonies of Military Comfort Women and Female Volunteer Corps Members*, edited by Ito Takashi, contains the following disclaimer (in the afterword): “The testimonies contained in this book may not be 100% accurate. (...) When we asked a woman the same question after some time had passed, she sometimes gave us a different answer, or an answer that differed from those given by other individuals.”<sup>44</sup>

In that case, let us ask how many of the 19 *reliable* testimonies in the collection issued by Prof. Ahn’s group claimed they were victims of official coercion. The answer: four.

One woman said she had been transported to Toyama Prefecture; another cited a brothel in Pusan (South Korea). These claims lack credibility, since neither of these two locations was a battle zone, and both already had pleasure quarters. There was no need for the military to transport comfort women there.

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Ito Takashi. *Shogen jugun ianfu, joshi kinro teishintai: kyosei renko sareta Chosenjin joseitachi* (Testimonies of military comfort women and female volunteer corps members: abducted Korean women) (Nagoya: Fubaisha, 1992).

The other two, already described, were given by Kim Hak-sun and Moon Ok-ju.

Kim Hak-sun told Prof. Ahn's group that she had been abducted, but her statement was unreliable because she had not mentioned her abduction in the lawsuit complaint. Moon is the woman who accumulated more than –26,000 working in a brothel in Burma. In the complaint prepared by Takagi Ken'ichi, like Kim Hak-sun, Moon said she was deceived by a Korean and taken to a brothel in Burma. When Prof. Ahn's group interviewed her, she said that several years before she went to Burma, she had been captured by Japanese military police and transported against her will to a brothel in Manchuria. This part of her story is suspicious, given its absence from the lawsuit complaint and the lack of a logical reason for said absence.

These circumstances reduce the number of women abducted by Japanese authorities to zero.

Freelance writer Morikawa Machiko interviewed Moon Ok-ju over a period of more than two years. Morikawa checked facts as much as she could, referring to the literature on the subject, and even visiting Burma. Then she wrote *Moon Ok-ju: I Was a Comfort Woman in a Shield Division on the Burma Front*.<sup>45</sup> Like Kim Hak-sun, Moon was sold to a kisaeng house due to poverty.

Ms. Morikawa's research also shows that Moon Ok-ju's account of her life in Burma agrees for the most part with division records. But it was not possible to confirm her story about being abducted by a military policeman and transported to Manchuria. Her statement to the effect that five Korean women who worked at the brothel in Manchuria had also worked with her in Manchuria strains disbelief.

Later on, a few more comfort women offered their testimonies. For instance, in February 2007, a woman named Lee Yong-soo testified at a hearing at the U.S. House of Representatives. Lee's account differs each time she tells it, and certainly doesn't present a strong case for official coercion.<sup>46</sup>

Even today, Prof. Ahn continues to speak out courageously on the comfort women issue. On a South Korean television program, he said: "Some former comfort women have stated that they were recruited by force. However, there is not one objective source in South Korea or Japan that supports their claims." Also, "There are red-light districts in South Korea, where many comfort women work. I suggest conducting research to learn why this phenomenon occurs. I can tell you that it is not the result of coercion."<sup>47</sup> Prof. Ahn has been criticized for such statements, but steadfastly refuses to alter them.

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<sup>45</sup> Morikawa Machiko, *Moon Ok-ju: Biruma sensen tate shidan no ianfu datta watashi* (I was a comfort woman in a shield division on the Burma front) (Tokyo: Nashinoki-sha, 1996).

<sup>46</sup> Hata Ikuhiko, "Maboroshi no jugun ianfu wo netsuzo shita Kono danwa wa ko naose!" (How the Kono Statement should read) in *Shokun!*, May 2007; translated and issued under the title "No Organized or Forced Recruitment: Misconceptions about Comfort Women and the Japanese Military" by the Society for the Dissemination of Historical Fact" in 2007.

<sup>47</sup> "Focus on the News" aired on the MBC Network on 06 December 2006.



In March of 2007, Prof. Shimada Yoichi of Fukui Prefectural University met with Prof. Ahn in Seoul. Here are some of the comments Prof. Ahn made during their conversation.

I was asked to participate in a project that involved exhaustive research, including interviews. To the best of my knowledge, no sources exist stating that the Japanese military abducted women and forced them to serve as comfort women. This was an era in which many girls from poor families were sold, so why would there have been a need for coercion? Such a claim makes no sense at all.

(...)

One of the women said that she was approached by a man who appeared to be a soldier. There were plenty of people wearing clothing resembling uniforms then.

(...)

Last year I was castigated for expressing these same views on television, but I have no intention of retracting them. There are no resources that prove official coercion. That is a fact, and I will not attempt to change the facts.

(...)

Prime Minister Abe must not apologize, even if apologies seem to be the easiest way to resolve the problem. Apologies will confuse the debate in South Korea.<sup>48</sup>

### **Lies spread through South Korea**

Two persons confessed to having committed criminal acts, but both of them were lying. The women who claimed to be victims of official coercion made inconsistent statements when interviewed. Their stories often changed from session to session. The female volunteer corps had no connection with comfort women. When the Japanese government did its own research, no wartime documents indicating that comfort women had been coerced were found, although no pains were spared searching for them.

We are left with absolutely no proof that comfort women were abducted or coerced. Therefore, one would expect the debate to have ended for good in about 1993. But in August 1993, the Kono Statement was issued.

At this stage, the Japanese government was in a very uncomfortable position, because Prime Minister Miyazawa had already apologized, despite the fact that no documents had been found to support the official coercion argument. South Korea had demanded that Japan acknowledge official coercion, but there was no evidence of official coercion.

At this juncture I would like to mention another exemplary citizen of South Korea, Oh Jae-hee, who was ambassador to Japan when the controversy erupted. When he returned to South Korea in January 1993, and made the following statements at a press conference.

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<sup>48</sup> Shimada Yoichi, report in *Gendai Koria* (Modern Korea), May 2007.

When Japanese Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi visited South Korea in January of last year, he apologized on six occasions in connection with the volunteer corps problem. I believe those apologies were sincere.

There is no limit to the number of “true” stories about the volunteer corps. We don’t know when we will have heard the last one. We must decide precisely how much more we want to hear before we draw the line.

There is no limit to the number of “true” stories about the volunteer corps that tell us what a certain woman ate for lunch, and what she was wearing.

When asked, “But isn’t it true that the Japanese government has not acknowledged the recruiting of comfort women by force, as South Korean victims have stated, claiming that the women’s testimonies are not conclusive?”: “The Japanese government is committed to a thorough investigation, and cannot make decisions based on uncorroborated testimony.”

No amount of investigation by the Japanese government has yielded evidence pertaining to some aspects of the problem. In an official investigation, it is impossible to make a determination solely on the basis of the testimony of persons who have a vested interest in its outcome. The same would apply to an investigation conducted in our own nation. I do not believe that the Japanese government is withholding documents attesting to official coercion.<sup>49</sup>

I have asked the Japanese government several times to determine whether coercion was involved in the recruiting of volunteer corps members, and to provide the whole truth about the volunteer corps.

Since truth is not finite, we will have to draw the line somewhere.

We cannot delay settling our differences indefinitely if Japan and South Korea are to have friendly relations in the future.

What we need to do now is put our emotions aside and engage in a civil public debate. Then we can agree on criteria that will enable us to find a balance between the real and the ideal, reach a consensus about what differences need to be settled, and apply that to our foreign policy toward Japan.<sup>50</sup>

I applaud Mr. Oh for his realistic, cool-headed argument. Unfortunately, when his remarks were made public, activist groups protested. Kim Young-sam, who was elected president in December 1992, and whose inauguration was to take place in February, reprimanded the ambassador. Mr. Oh was ordered to visit groups of former comfort women and apologize to them, which he did. When the new president took office, he replaced Mr. Oh.

In January 1992, at an ROK government meeting prior to Prime Minister Miyazawa’s visit to South Korea, Mr. Oh made another fair-minded statement: “We must not broach the comfort women problem at top-level meetings.”

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<sup>49</sup> *JoongAng Ilbo* (JoongAng Daily), 07 January 1993.

<sup>50</sup> *Toitsu Nippo* (Onekorea News), a periodical published by Korean residents of Japan, 08 January 1993.

According to a report in the July 1992 issue of *Monthly Chosun*, the head of the South Korean president's Secretariat called a meeting prior to Prime Minister Miyazawa's visit. The topics of discussion, in which representatives of relevant departments participated, were the comfort women problem and the trade deficit with Japan. That was the occasion on which Ambassador Oh recommended that the comfort women problem not be discussed at top-level meetings, but at working-level meetings. His recommendation was rewarded with harsh criticism: "People who have worked in Japan seem to have succumbed to Japanese logic." Other participants (the president's office staff and representatives of ministries with economic concerns) argued that the comfort women problem should be broached at top-level meetings to extract concessions from the Japanese on the trade deficit.

If we value the disclosure of facts more than anything else, we cannot acknowledge the abduction or coercion of comfort women unconditionally. But those who took that position were accused of having "succumbed to Japanese logic" and branded pro-Japanese, or traitors to their race.

At the heart of the problem is the fact that a huge number of South Koreans believe the fabricated stories about official coercion of comfort women. Lies have been given so much exposure that they have become truth. But they are still lies, like the emperor's new clothes. It is time to declare that the emperor is naked.

If they wish to improve Japanese-Korean relations, the South Koreans must expose the lies for what they are. Neither Japanese nor Korean diplomats have faced this problem squarely, the former delaying resolution by issuing a statement that more or less concurs with the lies.

Once there was a South Korean diplomat who said, "The emperor is naked." Once there was a South Korean scholar who interviewed former comfort women and revealed the untruths in their testimonies. But we have yet to see a Japanese diplomat as courageous or conscientious as Oh Jae-hee.

## CHAPTER 4: JAPANESE DIPLOMACY STUMBLES

### **Career bureaucrat's brainstorm: "coercion in the broad sense"**

Overseeing the Japanese government's investigation in 1993 was Ishihara Nobuo, deputy chief Cabinet secretary. Assisting Ishihara was Tanino Sakutarō, head of the Cabinet Councilors' Office on External Affairs. It was Tanino, who had begun his career in the Foreign Ministry's Asia Bureau, who was responsible for the brilliant "solution" to the comfort women controversy. The proverb "geniuses destroy nations" appears to be apt in this case.

The investigation yields no evidence of official coercion. But South Korea demands that Japan acknowledge official coercion. The prime minister of Japan has already apologized. The government must announce the findings of its investigation, i.e., that there was no official coercion. Such an announcement will aggravate Japanese-Korean relations. But the Japanese government cannot admit to past sins for there are only allegations, no proof. Which leads us to Tanino's brilliant solution: the expansion of the definition of the word *coercion* and the birth of "coercion in the broad sense."

If you force people to do something against their will, you are coercing them. When the word *coercion* is used in connection with the recruiting of comfort women, people generally assume official coercion (coercion by government or military authorities). The matter of who does the coercing is objective fact. But according to the Kono Statement, coercion (or the lack thereof) was the subjective judgment of the comfort women. When asked if they wanted to become comfort women, and they say (subjectively) no, I didn't, then they were coerced.

Let us extend this definition and apply it to a company employee. He probably doesn't like to get up early. If his mother (or his wife) wakes him, then that is coercion. The same logic is at work here.

All right, then. The government absolutely must use the word *coercion*. It is acknowledging coercion, but must acknowledge it in a way that is consistent with examined sources. For this purpose, the Kono Statement uses "against their own will."

Now let us examine the Kono Statement, reproduced below in its entirety.

Statement by the Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono  
on the result of the study on the issue of "comfort women"

August 4, 1993

The Government of Japan has been conducting a study on the issue of wartime "comfort women" since December 1991. I wish to announce the findings as a result of that study.

As a result of the study which indicates that comfort stations were operated in extensive areas for long periods, it is apparent that there existed a great number of comfort women. Comfort stations were operated in response to the request of the military authorities of the day. The then Japanese military was, directly or indirectly, involved in the establishment and management of the comfort stations and the transfer of comfort women. The recruitment of the comfort women was conducted mainly by private recruiters who acted in response to the

request of the military. The Government study has revealed that in many cases they were recruited against their own will, through coaxing coercion, etc., and that, at times, administrative/military personnel directly took part in the recruitments. They lived in misery at comfort stations under a coercive atmosphere.

As to the origin of those comfort women who were transferred to the war areas, excluding those from Japan, those from the Korean Peninsula accounted for a large part. The Korean Peninsula was under Japanese rule in those days, and their recruitment, transfer, control, etc., were conducted generally against their will, through coaxing, coercion, etc.

Undeniably, this was an act, with the involvement of the military authorities of the day, that severely injured the honor and dignity of many women. The Government of Japan would like to take this opportunity once again to extend its sincere apologies and remorse to all those, irrespective of place of origin, who suffered immeasurable pain and incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women.

It is incumbent upon us, the Government of Japan, to continue to consider seriously, while listening to the views of learned circles, how best we can express this sentiment.

We shall face squarely the historical facts as described above instead of evading them, and take them to heart as lessons of history. We hereby reiterated our firm determination never to repeat the same mistake by forever engraving such issues in our memories through the study and teaching of history.

As actions have been brought to court in Japan and interests have been shown in this issue outside Japan, the Government of Japan shall continue to pay full attention to this matter, including private researched [sic] related thereto.

The first mention of official coercion is in the sentence that begins “The Government study has revealed that in many cases they were recruited against their own will ... .” Here it states that women were recruited from other areas of the world, not just the Korean peninsula.

Then we have: “The recruitment of the comfort women was conducted mainly by private recruiters who acted in response to the request of the military.” This locution makes it clear that brokers, private citizens, were the main recruiters. But it places too much emphasis on the military, giving the impression that the brokers were responding to military requirements, when they were actually recruiting comfort women simply to make money. It also invites suspicions of official coercion.

The statement goes on to describe the circumstances of recruitment: “... in many cases they were recruited against their own will, through coaxing, coercion, etc. ... .” This is coercion in the broad sense. However, this description also makes it clear that there were many cases, in all recruitment areas, in which comfort women were *not* recruited against their will, but voluntarily sought such work. Perhaps the drafters of the statement were thinking of Japanese comfort women.

The serious flaws in the statement begin with “... at times, administrative/military personnel directly took part in the recruitments.” We shall return to this later. For the moment, I would like to focus on the portion that mentions their being transported to “war areas,” which describes recruitment on the Korean peninsula. Here again, we have coercion in the broad

sense: “their recruitment, transfer, control, etc., were conducted generally against their will, through coaxing, coercion, etc.”

But the presence of the adverb *generally* distinguishes this portion of the statement from that in the preceding paragraph about recruitment, which is less specific. Possibly the word was inserted so that the sentence would conform to the apocryphal notion that all comfort women from Korea were victims of official coercion, as the great majority of South Koreans believe they were.

According to media reports, the writers of the statement vacillated over whether or not to insert *generally* until the very last minute. The word has fine shades of meaning. If the writers had used *in every case*, they would be saying that every single comfort woman recruited in Korea was coerced. They used *generally*, however, which means that judging from the whole, on the average, it seems as though they were all coerced, but there were exceptions — there was at least one woman on the Korean peninsula who voluntarily became a comfort woman. But the South Koreans interpreted *generally* as *in every case*; in their eyes, the Japanese government had admitted that all comfort women had been coerced.

Now let us return to the recruiting of the comfort women, and the third mention of coercion in the broad sense: “[The comfort women] lived in misery at comfort stations under a coercive atmosphere.”

### **Kono Statement: sowing the seeds of future discord**

At a press conference held subsequent to the issuance of the Kono Statement, Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono was asked, “Are you acknowledging official coercion of comfort women?” Kono answered, “Yes.” The Japanese term used, *kyosei renko* (literally, *forcibly escorted*) usually implies that the entity exercising the force is some sort of authority, but it is the type of term favored by bureaucrats because of its nuance: one can also interpret it as coercion by an unspecified entity or individual. Here it refers to facts gleaned from relevant documents, and no more. However, the statement is worded in such a way that when the Koreans read it for the first time, they interpret it as an admission of official coercion.

At the heart of the problem is the fact that so many South Koreans believe the comfort women were victims of official coercion and, even more improbably, that they were sex slaves. The Kono Statement, with its equivocation “coercion in the broad sense,” does nothing to dispel their suspicions. It simply leaves the problem unresolved. The Foreign Ministry bureaucrat was clever. Since the ministry didn’t acknowledge official coercion, he had hit the ball in bounds, but just by a hair.

I absolutely must take issue, however, with “at times, administrative/military personnel directly took part in the recruitments.” What is being said here is that government and military authorities took part in the recruiting of comfort women against their will. This is tantamount to acknowledging official coercion (coercion in the narrow sense).

After the Kono Statement was issued, I went to the Northeast Asia Division of the Foreign Ministry, and asked one of the bureaucrats there what formed the basis of the statement. I

said I was particularly interested in the basis for “administrative/military personnel directly took part in the recruitments.”

Since the ministry was aware of my article in *Bungei Shunju*, I was told that the relevant bureaucrat was not there or given some other excuse. When I finally spoke to him, he said, “We couldn’t find any documentary evidence of official coercion, so we relied on the testimonies of the comfort women and on interviews with them.”

In that case, the inclusion of the portion referring to administrative/military personnel was gravely erroneous and irresponsible, since there was no corroboration for the admission. I was furious at the infringement of the human rights of those who were government or military authorities before the war. I wrote several magazine articles on the subject, but there was very little reaction.

It wasn’t until four years later that I learned what “administrative/military personnel directly took part in the recruitments” really meant. The Kono Statement contains a promise to include the comfort women controversy in the history education curriculum. Incredibly, in 1996, all middle school history textbooks that passed the screening process included descriptions of military comfort women. That phenomenon was the impetus for the formation of the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform by Nishio Kanji, Fujioka Nobukatsu and Kobayashi Yoshinori. It also marked the beginning of the second round of comfort women controversy debates.

At about the same time, some younger Diet representatives formed the League of Young Legislators Concerned about Japan’s Future and History Education.<sup>51</sup> The group began holding hearings involving persons familiar with the comfort women controversy.

At their invitation, I described some of the information I had acquired during the earlier debate in 1992-1993. I had the opportunity to ask councilor Higashi Yoshinobu of the Cabinet Councilors’ Office on External Affairs some questions. My first question pertained to the portion of the Kono Statement that reads “The Government study has revealed that in many cases they were recruited against their own will, through coaxing, coercion, etc., and that, at times, administrative/military personnel directly took part in the recruitments.” I was told that that portion refers not to Korean women who were victims of official coercion, but to war crimes committed by military personnel on an outpost in Java, Indonesia.

Looking into that incident, I discovered that five members of the Japanese military had forced a Dutch woman interned in a private detention center to work as a prostitute for approximately two months (late February to April 1944). The Allies tried them and four civilians for war crimes. Some of the accused were executed, others received prison sentences.

In the Kono Statement, the reference to the involvement of “administrative/military personnel” begins: “The recruitment of the comfort women ... .” There is no reference to administrative/military personnel in the description of the recruiting of comfort women in

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<sup>51</sup> Officers are Nakagawa Shoichi (chairman), Eto Seiichi (managing director), Abe Shinzo (secretary-general).

Korea, which begins: “As to the origin of those comfort women who were transferred to the war areas ... .” Therefore, there were no cases in which administrative/military personnel were involved in the recruitment of comfort women against their will.

Besides giving rise to a multitude of misunderstandings, the Kono Statement is an exercise in sophistry. A replacement statement is urgently needed. But flawed as it is, at least the Kono Statement does not admit to coercion in the narrow sense, or official coercion.

### **Payments a foregone conclusion with Asia Women’s Fund**

I have written in detail about the debate that raged from 1992 into 1993, from which those of us who argued that there was no official coercion of comfort women emerged victorious. That debate took place in a rather small arena among a few specialists — private citizens. We were quite isolated, but we fought well and hard. We had courageous allies, even in South Korea, in Prof. Ahn and Ambassador Oh, people who are vehemently opposed to the distortion of facts.

But then the Miyazawa administration issued the Kono Statement, which fails to confront the lies that have been spread about comfort women. Soon accusations that comfort women were victims of official coercion, or were forced to become sex slaves were resurrected, like zombies, and gradually penetrated Japan and South Korea.

We won the debate about the facts by a fair margin, but we lost the publicity battle because we failed to disseminate the outcome of the debate to a wide audience. Largely due to the Kono Statement, the fact that there was no official coercion was not communicated to the public. Instead, the official coercion lie, and other lies, swept through both nations like wildfire.

In 1994, the Murayama administration took office in Japan. In 1995, the Asia Women’s Fund was established, and the task of compensating former comfort women began. The Kono Statement had acknowledged coercion in the broad sense and apologized. But then the question was raised as to how the women were to be compensated. The Asia Women’s Fund, supported by donations from private citizens, was created to assist former comfort women.

However, the donations didn’t amount to much. Tax revenue was used to cover overhead and labor. Ultimately, each former comfort woman received ¥2 million and a letter of apology from the prime minister of Japan. Government funds amounting to ¥3 million were earmarked for medical care and other benefits for the women. This gesture was tantamount to the Japanese government’s paying compensation a second time, since the matter of compensation had already been settled diplomatically years ago.

The Asia Women’s Fund caused serious problems in South Korea. Members of the Volunteer Research Group of the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan and others opposed accepting money from the Asia Women’s Fund. They said they would not be satisfied until they had won litigation against or collected compensation from the Japanese government. They said that the Asia Women’s Fund was a fraud, since it was collecting donations from the Japanese people and calling them compensation (because the money wasn’t coming from the government). Consequently, some of the former comfort



women accepted the money, while others did not. Those who did not cursed those who had, calling them traitors.

Japan had apologized when an apology was demanded, and handed over money when it was asked to show good faith. Its efforts were rewarded by being labeled frauds. Perhaps activists take up causes simply because they like being activists; when a problem is solved or a cause is won, they don't know what to do with themselves.

Eventually, the South Korean government decided to make a lump-sum payment roughly equivalent to the Asia Women's Fund contribution to those women who had refused to accept money from the latter. South Korea had paid absolutely no compensation to conscripted laborers who were now disabled. But when former comfort women refused to accept money from Japan, the ROK government used funds from the national budget to pay them. Since the government had, in 1993, already paid former comfort women a lump sum of 5 million won, a monthly stipend of 150,000 won (later increased to 500,000 won), and granted them permission to reside in public housing, this was its second outlay.

Nevertheless, activists continued to hold demonstrations, demanding an apology from the Japanese government. Their lawsuits had been defeated in Japanese courts, their accusations were disappearing from textbooks, and a consensus that the comfort women had not been victims of official coercion was near. But then the flames of controversy were fueled once again, this time in an international arena extending to the United Nations and even the U.S. House of Representatives.

In a South Korean television broadcast aired in December 2006, Prof. Ahn Byong-jick criticized activist groups:

At first, I was among those who believed that comfort women were victims of official coercion. I engaged in joint research on the subject with the Volunteer Corps Research Group of the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan [hereafter abbreviated to Volunteer Corps Research Group], but withdrew from the project after three years. I withdrew because I realized that the purpose of the Volunteer Corps Research Group was not to acquire a thorough grasp of the comfort women controversy for preventive reasons, but simply to make trouble for Japan.

Chung Chin-sung, a Seoul National University professor who specializes in women's studies, is the chairwoman of the Volunteer Corps Research Group of which Prof. Ahn was so critical. Ms. Chung spent two years at Tokyo University doing research, and reportedly established an anti-Japanese network together with Japanese Japan-haters. Since her research was politically motivated (unlike Prof. Ahn, who was committed to uncovering the truth, she was more interested in making trouble for Japan), she was certain to find kindred spirits in Japan.

Prof. Chung's husband is editor-in-chief of the *Chosun Ilbo* newspaper. The publication has a conservative outlook, but normally its editorials are rational. Unfortunately, when it comes to comfort women, more often than not it spews the same fiction as its left-wing counterparts.

Having observed the controversy for so long, I realized that neither apologies (no matter how many) nor additional compensation (no matter how much) is going to resolve the emotional conflict that has soured Japan-ROK relations. On the contrary, such efforts will cause them to

deteriorate even further. Our first priority is to uncover the truth and to communicate it to those who have embraced the lies. To do otherwise would be meaningless.

## **Japanese Japan-haters and the media**

To describe my thoughts at the time, I am reproducing a critique of Japanese Japan-haters (a term that I coined) from my book *The Mountain of Misconceptions Separating Japan and Korea*, released on August 5, 1992.

At the vanguard of those hell-bent on denouncing “evil deeds” perpetrated by Japan prior to World War II are Japanese (*Asahi Shimbun*, the monthly *Sekai* and “progressive thinkers”). These elements have launched countless campaigns, all based on lies. In the 1970s, the truth came out about China’s Cultural Revolution. When Vietnam and Cambodia went to war with China, they took shelter in the two Koreas, didn’t they?

They probably thought that, at those two destinations, they would find many people who share their perception of the U.S. and Japan as the enemy. They spread a lot of lies in North and South Korea. But campaigns motivated by lies are weak. Now that the collapse of the Soviet Union has brought the Cold War to an end, with the West (mainly the U.S.) emerging victorious, their scheme is no longer viable. They should have been repenting for their sins, rather than looking to start another conflict.

Their last stronghold was the denunciation of Japan’s past evils in the two Koreas. Therefore, their primary purpose was the condemnation of Japan; it is very unlikely that they had given serious thought to supporting Korean victims. Why? Because if they had wanted to help the victims, the very first step they would have taken was to learn about them: who they were and how they had suffered.

But that’s not what they did. They ran campaigns, selecting evidence and witnesses that matched their objectives, or failing that, lying (e.g., equating the volunteer corps with comfort women). A great number of Japanese who were unaware of the facts donated money or at least provided moral support, believing that the activists were sincere.

Meanwhile, in South Korea, there are former comfort women, former soldiers and civilians who worked for the military, and conscripted laborers who have aligned themselves with Japanese Japan-haters. These people, in actuality, have been stigmatized in South Korea and labeled pro-Japan or Japan collaborators. These are people who were forced to collaborate. They were not part of the liberation movement, and did not fight against the Japanese military. Consequently, their denunciation of Japan was bound to intensify.

(...)

Moreover, the climate in the South Korean media is such that it is perfectly all right to print anything critical of Japan without checking the facts. And South Korea’s Japan specialists are easily swayed by criticism of Japan and quick to make anti-Japanese statements. In other words, there’s plenty of fuel for the anti-Japan fire. All the circumstances are right for it to blaze brilliantly. When the Japanese Japan-haters attack Japan, the South Korean media give them a huge amount of coverage. Such reciprocity has opened up a rift between the two nations, and caused irreparable damage to Japan-ROK relations, which should by rights be friendly.

Another problem stems from the governments of Japan and South Korea, both of which make the situation worse. One of them makes demands without regard for past events, while the other reacts to those demands piecemeal, instead of opposing them squarely.

(...)

Japanese Japan-haters, whose sole purpose in life is to condemn Japan, have joined forces with South Koreans who feel the need to criticize everything that Japan does. They are aided by the media of both nations, which intentionally misinform the public. The two governments are sucked into the whirlpool and react without thinking. The result is that those who love Japan and once wanted to maintain friendly relations with South Korea, gradually lose any affection they had for South Korea. Koreans who love their nation and are well-suited to building a rational, friendly relationship with Japan are branded as traitors, and are losing the right to voice their opinions. This is an extremely unfortunate situation, which affects the peace and security of both nations, and that of all of East Asia, for that matter.

At no time has it been more important to conduct a rational debate based solely on the facts than now. Everyone with an interest in Japan-Korea relations, including this writer, must ensure that it takes place.<sup>52</sup>

### **All-night debate on television**

In the midst of the debate over whether there was official coercion of comfort women, I appeared twice on a television show called “All-Night TV.” The theme on both occasions was comfort women.

The first time I participated, in 1993, attorney Takagi Ken’ichi, Diet representative (SDP) Tsujimoto Kiyomi, and social commentator Ozawa Ryoko were also on the panel.

I had appeared on the program once before when the theme was the fingerprinting of North Korean residents of Japan. This time, however, the request had come from Prof. Nakagawa Yatsuhiro, a member of the faculty of Tsukuba University. He had telephoned me, saying, “They asked me to appear on a program about comfort women, but that’s not my specialty. I told them I’ll do it if you appear too. How about it?”

I had written essays and articles on the subject, but I hadn’t spoken about it on television. I hesitated because I anticipated being treated like a villain once I said that there had been no official coercion. But Prof. Nakagawa said he wouldn’t appear unless I did, and I didn’t want to lose face, so I agreed.

The debate began strangely, with a clip from an interview with Yoshida Seiji, followed by another showing comfort women crying and screaming.

Immediately, I spoke up: “You just showed footage from an interview with Yoshida Seiji. His tale of abduction is not credible. Soon after the Korean translation of his book was released, it was lambasted by a woman reporter for the *Cheju Newspaper*. She conducted an

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<sup>52</sup> Nishioka Tsutomu, *Nikkan gokai no shin’en* (The mountain of misconceptions separating Japan and Korea) (Tokyo: Aki Shobo, 1992).

investigation of Yoshida's claim that he rounded up comfort women on Cheju Island with the aid of some soldiers. When she interviewed local people, they unanimously dismissed Yoshida's story, calling it ridiculous. Also, a local historian has declared Yoshida's book a work of fiction, and called its author immoral."

Then I made a comment about how much importance had been placed on the testimonies of former comfort women's testimonies. I had brought my copy of *Testimonies, Part 1*, compiled by Prof. Ahn's group, with me.

"The South Korean government has said that everything is in these testimonies. Only four of the 19 former comfort women interviewed said they were victims of coercion. Two of them said that they were transported to Pusan and Toyama, respectively, where they were forced to become comfort women. But neither Pusan nor Toyama was a war zone. The other two women's testimonies differ from lawsuit claims filed, where they concern coercion. That means that there is no proof that any of these women was coerced."

I expected Takagi to argue that there was indeed coercion, but he didn't. Instead, he attempted to change the subject, saying, "There is more to the problem than how they were transported. What their lives were like afterwards is more important."

I'm certain that the other guests had intended to focus on official coercion of comfort women. But by that time, I think they knew that Yoshida's confession no longer had any credibility, and that of the many official documents examined, none had yielded any evidence of official coercion. The debate among specialists in the area about the official coercion of comfort women had already subsided, in 1993, right after the Kono Statement was issued.

However, I doubt that I convinced any of the panelists other than the moderator and Takagi, perhaps because my explanations were over their heads. The two of them seemed at a loss for words after I presented my case, but the others didn't seem to understand what was being said. But I thought to myself, "The comfort women debate is over. Now that the official coercion argument has been discredited, and we have established the fact that poverty prompted the comfort women's parents to sell them, this is no longer a diplomatic problem, nor is there any need to debate it on television." But I was annoyed at the moderator and the other panelists for not addressing this important point. I waited patiently for my next opportunity to speak.

Ozawa Ryoko was making comments like, "All men are evil. They should be castrated before they're sent to the front lines." I honestly couldn't tell if she was serious.

I had been devoting all my energy to a quest for the truth, poring over documents, interviewing and reinterviewing people connected with the controversy, traveling to South Korea. But the television studio is not the proper arena for a serious debate.

Still, I thought it was better to speak out. I said as much as I could. After the program ended, I received a telephone call from the television network. Apparently Yoshida Seiji had registered a complaint. A representative of the network was going to visit him to explain things. Right away, I said, "I'm not going to apologize, and I will be very upset if you apologize on my behalf. Tell Mr. Yoshida that he's welcome to sue me for defamation of character."

## Television networks shun Yoshida Seiji

In 1997, the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform was established, in part because of members' objections to the inclusion of references to comfort women in middle school history textbooks, beginning in April of that year. In January 1997, leading members of the Society and its opponents appeared on a television program advertised as follows: "War of words! References to comfort women in textbooks: right or wrong?" I wasn't even a member of the Society, but one of its officers asked me to appear.

Representing the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform were Nishio Kanji, Fujioka Nobukatsu and Kobayashi Yoshinori. Opposing them were Prof. Yoshimi Yoshiaki (Chuo University), Uesugi Satoshi (secretary of the Center for Research and Documentation on Japan's War Responsibility), Kajimura Taiichiro (a journalist residing in Germany), journalist Nishino Rumiko, and Prof. Takashima Nobuyoshi (University of the Ryukyus).

Also present were Prof. Hata Ikuhiko (Chiba University), Prof. Yoon Keun-cha (Kanagawa University) and Dave Spector (television commentator).

Spector was seated next to me. He placed a copy of *The Comfort Women*<sup>53</sup> by George Hicks, an Australian scholar, on the table in front of us, saying, "[The debate] is over now, isn't it?"

Hicks' book is largely based on Yoshida Seiji's testimony; it is totally irresponsible, and does not reflect recent developments in the debate in Japan. But it was apparently the source of Spector's "wisdom" on the subject. Prof. Yoon too was ill-prepared: he said that comfort women were mobilized as members of female volunteer corps—and this in 1997!

As this was the second debate on the comfort women on "All Night TV!" I was prepared. As I mentioned earlier, the 1993 program featured a lengthy excerpt from an interview with Yoshida Seiji. During that debate, I quoted from the *Cheju Newspaper* article, and stated that Yoshida's testimony was not reliable.

Perhaps the television network people had done some investigating on their own and realized their errors. Whatever the case, TV Asahi stopped using Yoshida Seiji's testimony. They may have been convinced when news of the aforementioned newspaper article got around, but in any case, they distanced themselves from Yoshida. They did not, however, issue corrections on the air.

When there was a lull in the conversation, I pounced: "There's something wrong with this network. There's something wrong with this program."

"The previous time I appeared on this program, you showed part of an interview with Yoshida Seiji. I told you that his testimony was a fake. But TV Asahi never issued a correction. The fact that you never issued a correction means that you still believe Yoshida, and that makes me a liar."

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<sup>53</sup> George Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* (New York, W.W. Norton, 1995).

“Before asking me to make a second appearance, the officers of TV Asahi and the producers of this program should have told their viewers that the Yoshida interview was suspect, and issued an apology.”

That program was the farthest thing imaginable from a rational debate. It was simply a venue for a large number of people to say whatever they wanted. I had very few opportunities to speak, so I had to speak quickly, but I was determined to voice my disapproval of the television network and the program.

When I was preparing to write this book, I purchased additional books about comfort women. Among them was one by Ishikawa Itsuko, entitled *Girls Forced To Become Military Comfort Women*.<sup>54</sup> First published in 1993, it went into its 15th printing in 2005, but is still sold in bookstores. The author cites Yoshida Seiji’s book at great length, as though it were fact. Iwanami Shoten should be censured for continuing to sell this lie-riddled book, especially since it is intended for young adults.

### **Yoshimi Yoshiaki pronounces comfort women “sex slaves”**

The first topic of discussion on the program was official coercion. I addressed a question to Yoshimi Yoshiaki, “Professor Yoshimi, has evidence been found indicating that there was official coercion on the Korean peninsula?” “No, no evidence to that effect has been found.” Later, Kobayashi Yoshinori reproduced our dialogue in a comic strip, with the caption: “This debate is truly over.” My thoughts precisely.

In the February 27, 1997 issue of *The People’s Korea*, a magazine issued by Chosen Soren (General Association of Korean Residents in Japan), Yoshimi wrote, “Official documents attesting to coercive recruiting of women (slave hunts) by government or military authorities have not yet been discovered.” Even Wada Haruki (Tokyo University professor emeritus), one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the Asia Women’s Fund, has stated that “there is no documentary evidence for the claim that there was direct coercion by government or military authorities.”<sup>55</sup>

Later, Yoshimi and others who share his views sought refuge in emphasizing “coercion in the broad sense” (an equivocation created by a cornered government) typified by the line in the Kono Statement that reads “They lived in misery at comfort stations under a coercive atmosphere.”

Incidentally, in commentary in *Documents Relating to Military Comfort Women* (published in 1992, prior to the issuance of the Kono Statement), Yoshimi writes: “Many Japanese assume that comfort women were victims of official coercion — that would be coercion in the narrow sense. However, I would urge them to give serious thought to coercion in the broad

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<sup>54</sup> Ishikawa Itsuko, *Jugun ianfu ni sareta shojotachi* (Girls forced to become military comfort women) (Tokyo: Iwanami Junior Shoten, 1993).

<sup>55</sup> See *Ajia josei kikin nyu-su* (Asia Women’s Fund news), No. 8, 05 March 1997.

sense, meaning that they were tricked or otherwise deceived.”<sup>56</sup> Kobayashi Yoshinori cites this statement in Volume 4 of his *New Arrogance Manifesto*,<sup>57</sup> and credits Yoshimi for giving birth to this deceptive phrase (and argument).

As Kobayashi indicates, common sense does not help us follow Yoshimi’s logic. He concedes that comfort women were not victims of official coercion, but insists that they were nonetheless sex slaves.

The comfort women system was slavery of a sort more insidious than state-licensed prostitution, which at least had safeguards. The military, however, established no safeguards for the comfort women, who were the victims of slavery of the worst sort, a violation of international law, which Japan recognized.<sup>58</sup>

Prof. Yoshimi offers the following evidence for his claim that the comfort women were enslaved:

1. There were specific formalities that potential comfort women were required to complete in Japan, but not in Korea.
2. In accordance with international law, licensed prostitutes had to be at least 21 years old. In Korea, however, the minimum age was 17, meaning that minors were not protected by international law there.

The treaties in force at the time allowed for some exceptions in their application in colonies. These were meant to allow for differences in economic and social situations, and Japan simply chose to apply them in that way. It is possible to characterize such behavior as discrimination, but it takes a great leap of faith to call it sex slavery.

I offer the following description of true slavery by way of an excerpt from a recent newspaper article.

Madala (32) has brown skin. His eyes and the contour of his nose tell us that both Arab and black blood flow in his veins. He tells his story in a quiet voice.

“I was born a slave. My master’s ancestors bought my great-grandmother.”

Madala lives in Mauritania, Northwestern Africa. Even in the 21st century, he was one of the several thousands (some say ten thousands) of slaves in that nation. Three years ago, he escaped from his master, a camel herder in an arid region in the north.

When Madala was a boy chasing herds of camels, his master made sure he knew he was a possession. He was forbidden to sit on the same carpet with his master’s family, to look them

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<sup>56</sup> Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Jugun ianfu shiryoshu* (Documents Relating to Military Comfort Women) (Tokyo: Otsuki Shoten, November 1992).

<sup>57</sup> Kobayashi Yoshinori, *Shin go-manizumu sengen: dai yonkan* (New arrogance manifesto: vol. 4) (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1998).

<sup>58</sup> Yoshimi Yoshiaki, article in *Chosen jiho* (The people’s Korea), 27 February, 1997.

in the eye, or to watch them eating. He was fed scraps of leftover food, and his bed was a mat on the floor in the back of a stable. He received no pay, and had never gone to school.

If he lost a camel, he was beaten. Scars on his left cheek were reminders of such punishment. “I saw my mother and my elder sister beaten many times. Some slaves who tried to escape were caught and killed.”<sup>59</sup>

Slaves are possessions of their masters. They are made to work without remuneration, and they cannot complain if they are beaten. Madala, the central figure in the newspaper story, was born into slavery in the 1970s. His mother and 12 siblings are still slaves — possessions of their master.

In contrast, Korean comfort women were able to return home if they returned advances that had been paid them. Mun Ok-ju saved ¥26,000 in three years — a huge amount of money — and she was not the only one. How does one justify calling them slaves?

Prof. Yoshimi has become the leader of a team of nine researchers who are doing cooperative research on the comfort women controversy. The results of their work can be found in *Joint Research: Comfort Women Servicing the Japanese Military*.<sup>60</sup> The book describes empirical research relating to the recruiting of comfort women in Korea. It states that recruiting there was done not by authorities (the military, the police or the Governor-General’s office), but by private brokers.

Among the brokers were men who had received authorization from the military to operate brothels. There were also procurers (pimps), who worked for the brokers. The procurers would travel around Korea recruiting women and take them to brokers in large cities. Their recruiting methods involved purchasing women from their parents, and deceit (lies about the type of work they would be doing, etc.). These were the same methods used to recruit women for the entertainment industry in Korea. The Governor-General’s office punished frauds committed by procurers as criminal acts.

The book also mentions advertisements for comfort women in Korean newspapers, and describes Korean pleasure quarters of that time. When warfare intensified, fewer men visited red-light districts, since they didn’t want to be accused of decadence. Records show that brokers transported comfort women to war zones. This is not speculation, it is evidence.

From this book we can deduce that comfort women were not recruited coercively in Korea by government or military authorities, and that some of them were sold to brokers by their parents. Nevertheless, Yoshimi persists in calling comfort women “sex slaves.”

Because Yoshimi is considered *the* authority on comfort women, he often receives inquiries and requests for interviews from overseas. He continues to describe the comfort women system as a type of slavery more evil than licensed prostitution. The result is that the U.S.

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<sup>59</sup> *Sankei Express*, 13 May 2007.

<sup>60</sup> Yoshimi Yoshiaki and Kawata Fumiko, eds., *Kyodo kenkyu: Nihongun ianfu* (Joint research on prostitutes who serviced the Japanese military) (Tokyo: Otsuki Shoten, 1995).



Congress came to view comfort women as sex slaves, and drafted a questionable resolution unilaterally condemning Japan.

From an international perspective, if members of the Japanese military had abducted comfort women, as Yoshida Seiji claims, they would indeed have been sex slaves. However, it is ludicrous to claim that they were sex slaves because they were not afforded the same safeguards as Japanese comfort women.

Does Prof. Yoshimi deserve to be called a scholar? Or is he a professional Japan-hater?

At about the same time as Yoshimi was doing his joint research in Japan, the aforementioned Prof. Ahn Byong-jick was guiding young Korean researchers through another project. Yoshimi's methods pale in comparison with Ahn's.

Still, there have been Japanese scholars who are conscientious about research. One of them is Prof. Kurahashi Masanao (Aichi Prefectural University). In August 1994, his book *Historical Research on the Comfort Women Controversy: Prostitutes or Sex Slaves?*<sup>61</sup> was published in August 1994. Prof. Kurahashi has been involved in research on *karayuki-san*<sup>62</sup> for many years. He proposed classifying military comfort women as either prostitutes or sex slaves: one or the other. However, when he explained his theory to Prof. Chung Chin-sung, an anti-Japanese activist who does research on comfort women, she said, "This will never gain acceptance in South Korea."

Prof. Kurahashi's response was: "It's true that they needed the money, but these Korean women voluntarily went to battle zones, knowing why they were going, and became military comfort women. South Koreans are unable to accept these simple facts. They desperately want to believe that the comfort women were victims of violent abductions, transported to war zones against their will."<sup>63</sup>

"I can certainly understand their need to come up with the coercion argument. But we must remember that the quest for historical fact must be dispassionate and rational. I believe that such a quest will deepen mutual understanding and promote friendly relations between our two nations."<sup>64</sup>

Prof. Kurahashi indicates that advertisements for comfort women appeared twice (in October and November of 1944) in the *Mainichi Nippo*, a newspaper published in Korea. Therefore, comfort women of the prostitute classification were being recruited as late as 1944. Had all

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<sup>61</sup> Kurahashi Masanao, *Jugun ianfu mondai no rekishiteki kenkyu: baishunfu gata to seiteki dorei gata* (Historical research on the comfort women controversy: prostitutes or sex slaves) (Tokyo: Kyoei Shobo, 1994).

<sup>62</sup> Literally, "Miss Go-to-China," this term is used to describe Japanese women who were sold into prostitution or voluntarily became prostitutes, and worked in countries other than Japan, mainly China and Korea.

<sup>63</sup> Kurahashi, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

comfort women been coerced, there would have been no need for advertisements (which are proof that there was no official coercion).

When you delve even moderately deeply into this subject, you soon run into darkness. You cannot, in good conscience, accept South Korean claims. In the face of darkness, intellectual honesty prevails. Only people like attorney Takagi Ken'ichi and Yoshimi believe that they must protect their political stance at all cost. They are trapped with their fictions and their sophistry, which they are willing to use to destroy Japan.

However, Prof. Kurahashi also claims that at the end of the war, military and government authorities recruited comfort women in slave hunts, and abused them like sex slaves at the brothels. This is the other half of his theory: the sex slave type of comfort woman. But there are no documents attesting to the existence of sex slaves. Here, Kurahashi crosses the line of intellectual honesty. Some former comfort women say that they were victims of official coercion, had no freedom whatsoever at the comfort stations, were not paid for their work, and if they didn't obey were assaulted or killed. Kurahashi seems to believe them. When asked why there is no evidence to support these claims, he says a concerted effort was made to destroy any documentary evidence; this does not make sense.

For Kurahashi's sex slave theory to hold water, we must assume that women were victims of official coercion, and not hide behind the "coercion in the broad sense" excuse. But Prof. Kurahashi swears that evidence to that effect has yet to be found. Whatever his sins, he is at least innocent of the sophistry so dear to Yoshimi.

### **Kono Statement debate extends to Diet**

Like Prof. Yoshimi, *Asahi Shimbun* also did an about-face, shifting its focus from coercive recruiting of comfort women to the miserable lives they led in the brothels. We had won the battle over coercion waged since 1992. However, the losers ran to hide in the shelter of "coercion in the broad sense" as used in the Kono Statement, and wouldn't allow the controversy to die a natural death. Then they began writing editorials about conscientious scholars who had disproved the official coercion argument, along the lines of "Some would have it that there were never any military comfort women at all" in a reverse sort of attack.

The Japanese government had used the expression "coercion in the broad sense" in the Kono Statement as an expedient. This was a gesture of diplomatic consideration toward South Korea, and its intent was to keep the South Koreans from bringing up the subject of comfort women again. But *Asahi Shimbun* belabored "coercion in the broad sense," using the comfort women controversy as ammunition for further Japan-bashing.

Ultimately, the comfort women controversy boils down to how the fraudulent press coverage of *Asahi Shimbun* is amended. The newspaper has not issued even one retraction for its willful fabrications. Conversely, it continues to harp on more compensation for the comfort women, more accounts of comfort women in history textbooks, and calls anyone who protests "evildoers who refuse to face history."

Even so, the comfort women taboo was shattered in about 1997; since then it has been possible to debate the subject openly. Judging from the progress we have made since 1992 in determining the facts, we should be able to bring this matter to a reasonable conclusion.

The Japanese government gets no credit for this progress, nor does the Foreign Ministry. The credit goes to the scholars and researchers who investigated and interviewed, and then disseminate the knowledge they had acquired to the Japanese people: there was no coercion of comfort women by government or military authorities.

*Asahi Shimbun* and Prof. Yoshimi are still caught up in “coercion in the broad sense.” Now they’re saying that even if there was no official coercion, there was certainly serious infringement of human rights. But the debate is nearly over, and I am feeling optimistic.

Kobayashi Yoshinori, who appeared with me on “All-Night TV,” has been of immeasurable help to our cause. One reason his graphic novels (*New Arrogance Manifesto* and *On War*, for instance), are so immensely popular is his breaking of taboos by addressing a topic head on. At first, he wasn’t sure whether or not there had been official coercion, so he presented both sides of the argument.

But research proved that there was no official coercion. Kobayashi is not afraid of taboos; he said, “The emperor is naked.” Many young people believed him, and the facts finally began to receive an audience.

The message Kobayashi conveys is, for the most part, the same one that we have been debating for four or five years. But discovering the facts and communicating them to a wide audience are two different things. As already described, we won the first round of the debate in 1992, but we lost the publicity battle. That is where Kobayashi stepped in.

At about the same time that the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform was formed, Diet members awakened to the incongruities in the textbook controversy. As a result, the League of Young Legislators Concerned about Japan’s Future and History Education was established. It is headed by Nakagawa Shoichi, chairman of the LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) Policy Research Council; Prime Minister Abe is secretary-general.

The League started out as a group of young Diet members who believe that common sense should prevail in Japan, not masochism. To determine whether or not there had been official coercion of comfort women, the League held hearings to which it invited speakers. At these hearings, legislators asked the questions. I was invited to one of them. Seated next to me was someone from the Cabinet Councilors’ Office on External Affairs, with whom I had a conversation. Apparently, language in the Kono Statement that I had assumed was an acknowledgement of official coercion was a reference to war crimes committed in Indonesia by Japanese military personnel, which I have already described.

In March 1997, there was a debate in the Diet. At that time, Koyama Takao, a member of the House of Councillors, told me that the Budget Committee was planning to address the comfort women controversy in earnest, and asked for my assistance. I laid out the facts that had been uncovered during the debate that began in 1992. Then I asked Koyama for his help in determining the basis for the Kono Statement, especially the part that reads “administrative/military personnel directly took part in the recruitments.” I also told him that

I was very interested in learning whether any official documents had been located that attest to official coercion of comfort women.

Representative Koyama took great pains to respond to my requests. He made a complete examination of the documents relating to comfort women located and disclosed by the government.

At about the same time, journalist Sakurai Yoshiko issued a report entitled “Paying the Price for Back-Room Diplomacy.” It describes interviews with former Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Ishihara Nobuo and former Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono Yohei, and points to flaws in the Kono Statement.<sup>65</sup> As a result, there was heightened interest in the Kono Statement.

On March 12, 1997, with Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro, Chief Cabinet Secretary Kajiyama Seiroku and most of the Cabinet (including the foreign minister and minister of education) in attendance, Rep. Koyama began his inquiry. Seated in the gallery, I listened to the entire proceedings, of which highlights of the portion pertaining to the Kono Statement follow.

Koyama: What documents were the basis for the determination that there had been official coercion, as stated in the government report?

Hirabayashi Hiroshi (chief Cabinet councilor for external affairs): Among the documents discovered by the government, there was none that indicated abduction by military or government authorities.

What I mean to say is that, taking all sources into account, including other testimonies and documents, we found factors that suggest coercion.

Koyama: I have a copy of the report here. Please tell us which portions of it have been disclosed, and which have not.

Hirabayashi: The report you have mentions documents located in Japanese ministries and agencies, the National Diet Library and the United States National Archives. It also mentions interviews with relevant individuals, internal and external documents, and other types of publications issued by other nations. We have disclosed everything except for interviews with individuals.

Koyama: Then you have disclosed all internal and external Japanese documents referred to in the report?

Hirabayashi: Yes, in principle. A South Korean organization, Association for the Pacific War Victims, provided us with some documents designated “for internal use only.” In their case, we made an exception, and did not disclose the content.

Koyama: Then, you have disclosed the content of all documents emanating from Japanese administrative organs, the National Diet Library and the U.S. National Archives. And from them you ascertained that there are no documents indicating official coercion.

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<sup>65</sup> Sakurai Yoshiko, “Misshitsu gaiko no daisho” (Paying the price for back-room diplomacy) in *Bungei Shunju*, April 1997.

In that case, what remains are interviews with relevant individuals, in other words, mainly former comfort women, which you have not disclosed. Additionally, you have not disclosed testimonies of former comfort women compiled by the Association for the Pacific War Victims.

Hirabayashi: That is correct.

Koyama: Have those testimonies been verified?

Hirabayashi: I will answer that question. You ask if we have checked testimonies for veracity. No, we have not. Some of them were provided by former military comfort women, others by former prostitutes, and still others by military personnel. We did not check them for accuracy.

Koyama: *In that case, the government based its August 4, 1993 decision on undisclosed, unverified sources.* [Italics supplied.]

Hirabayashi: *Ultimately, yes. But we arrived at the decision only after having examined all the sources, each one in detail.* [Italics supplied.]

Koyama: That is exactly why the work of the people who conducted that investigation in accordance with government policy is being called into question from many quarters. Scholars like Prof. Hata Ikuhiko of Chiba University and Prof. Nishioka Tsutomu of Tokyo Christian University have done in-depth investigations into publicly available sources, and have proved that very few of them are reliable.

For instance, I have already mentioned the report by Sakurai Yoshiko, which can be found in the issue of *Bungei Shunju* currently on sale. There is also an interview in *Sankei Shimbun* (I believe it was in last Sunday's newspaper). In it Ishihara Nobuo, then deputy chief Cabinet secretary says, after acknowledging that the interviews done by the government in South Korea were decisive, says, "We vacillated until the very last minute. Since all those interviewed were telling their own stories, it was entirely possible that they altered their accounts to their advantage. It is unfortunate that we were forced to base our decision on them."

Furthermore, the person who headed the Cabinet Councilors' Office on External Affairs (now an ambassador) said, "If pressed, I'd have to say that I have doubts about them."

Tanaka Kotaro, who was present at the interviews with former comfort women, spoke at a press conference in Seoul on the day the interviews ended: "The women do not have clear recollections of portions of their stories. We are not going to press them on every little detail. We will simply accept the testimonies as given." His statement was carried in the Japanese media as well.

The process having been what it was, there is bound to be a great deal of suspicion. We are wondering how you could possibly make such a decision, given the nature of your sources.

I would like to hear the chief Cabinet secretary's opinion on the following: in the drafting of the Kono Statement, decisions were made on the basis of the process that I have just described. How are we to address the insult to the honor of the military personnel and police of that era, who devoted their lives to their nation?

Kajiyama Seiroku: The statement issued by the chief Cabinet secretary pertaining to the military comfort women controversy was based on the outcome of a tireless investigation conducted conscientiously by the administration of the time. I stand by that statement.

Having heard the committee member's concerns about the matter, and having reread a variety of news reports and other resources, I am reminded of the difficulties presented by this problem.

Koyama: In closing, I would like to ask the prime minister for his opinion on this problem.

Hashimoto Ryutaro: I believe that everyone agrees with me that the comfort women controversy infringes on the honor and dignity of all women. Additionally, if I were to give my personal opinion, I would say that the weight of history rests ever heavily upon us. Mindful of that, we bear the responsibility of communicating that history to future generations.

As I listened to the representative's questions and the government's responses, I wondered how much we should reveal to our citizens at the various stages of their lives, and realized that we have a duty to communicate the history of this nation to them.

The atmosphere at this question-and-answer session was extremely charged. Especially shocking to me was the admission (italicized above) that the reference in the Kono Statement to official coercion was based on undisclosed, uncorroborated testimonies supplied by and interviews with former comfort women.

Cabinet members who were not being questioned, among them former Prime Minister Koizumi (then minister of health and welfare), listened carefully, leaning forward in their seats. This was probably the first time they had heard this very important information.

Also shocking were the comments from Chief Cabinet Secretary Kajiyama and Prime Minister Hashimoto. They now knew that the Kono Statement, which had seriously injured Japan's honor, rests on a very shaky foundation. Even so, they mentioned nothing about taking steps that seemed so obvious to me: revising the statement and interrogating Kono Yohei and everyone else involved in its drafting. Instead, both men read abstruse statements prepared by bureaucrats.

However, it was obvious from Kajiyama's comments and his demeanor that he had been impressed by the complexity of the controversy. He had said that any discussion of the comfort women controversy must reflect the knowledge that licensed prostitution existed at that time, a remark that was greeted with vehement criticism from South Korea.

I was shocked once again the next day when I read the newspapers and discovered that, despite the importance of the question-and-answer session at the Diet, only *Sankei Shimbun* mentioned it.

I would have expected them to write that the Kono Statement should be invalidated, or that former Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono should be summoned and a hearing held in the Diet. But they wrote nothing.

Also strange was the fact that Prime Minister Hashimoto commented only on women's human rights, after such an intense exchange. Normally, it would be reasonable to say that the Kono Statement is flawed, that there was no official coercion, or that the assumption that there was official coercion is inaccurate.

But no one said anything. This was Japan's Diet, but it seemed as though diplomatic forces had paralyzed it. Is there freedom of speech in Japan? Then there is Japan's media, acting as though the question-and-answer session had never taken place.

This is exactly what happened with the North Korean abductions. In 1988, when Kajiyama Seiroku was head of the National Public Safety Commission, such a session was held relating to the disappearance of six Japanese citizens, he uttered an historic response: "It is very likely that these people were abducted by North Korea." But of the major dailies, only the *Sankei* and *Nikkei* newspapers covered it, and even they only superficially.

### **Interference in Japanese internal affairs: déjà vu**

Anti-Japanese forces lost the debate in Japan. Since then, they have launched a new assault, spreading their official coercion fiction to other parts of the world. Here is how the assault proceeds: When a Cabinet member or someone of equal stature makes a statement about comfort women, that statement is immediately and widely publicized. Then the South Korean government (or the government of another nation) issues a protest. Japanese correspondents in South Korea interview South Koreans, starting out with "What is your opinion about the comment made by the Japanese politician?"

When one of our politicians attempts to voice an objection, he is told that such an objection would cause a scheduled Japan-ROK summit meeting to be canceled, so he ends up refraining from stating it, or retracting it.

Thus, when historical events pertaining to Japan are at issue, it is impossible to debate them in Japan's own Diet. South Korea might get angry, or China might get angry, so there can't even be a debate.

This is the same sort of scheme that took shape in 1982 during the first textbook controversy. The "history masochists" teamed up with forces critical of Japan in South Korea and China, and then proceeded to produce a great number of fictional accounts that put Japan in a bad light.

When the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform published a new textbook devoid of the masochistic historical perception, the South Korean government, through diplomatic channels, told us not to use it. Members of the Korean Residents Union in Japan crowded into school board meetings to voice their objections to the new textbook. No one asked the Koreans to use it. Foreigners have no business interfering so brazenly in Japanese history education. The Japanese decide on the content of Japanese textbooks. Foreign attempts to influence Japanese decisions are intervention in the internal affairs of another nation.

Despite the fact that history education is of great importance to the overall education of citizens of Japan, it has become almost impossible to debate this subject, even in the Diet.

This situation is the creation, the intentional creation, of Japanese Japan-haters. The comfort women controversy and similar problems were created by those Japan-haters when they went to South Korea seeking former comfort women to serve as plaintiffs in litigation.

Soon after Yoshida Seiji's book was released, he went to South Korea and apologized on a television program there created for that purpose. Since I was living in Seoul at the time, I viewed the program in my home. I remember that it was aired sometime in February 1983; the program ended with Yoshida bowing deeply in apology.

Afterwards, I went out to eat at a restaurant I patronized frequently. One of the female employees asked me if I had seen the television program. Yes, I said. Then she asked, "Is it safe for Mr. Yoshida to return to Japan?"

"What?"

"He came all the way to South Korea to apologize, so he must be a good person. But I was wondering if he is going to get in trouble for saying bad things about his country."

I realized that all ordinary South Koreans must be thinking the same thing. Before Japanese Japan-haters ignited the controversy, the South Korean conventional wisdom was: people of every nation can be expected to speak well of their own country. Most people are patriotic, including the Japanese. Therefore, South Koreans worried that someone who traveled to another country and spoke ill of Japan would be attacked by angry crowds when he returned to Japan, even if he was speaking the truth.

That is also why South Koreans normally wouldn't contemplate going all the way to Japan to institute a lawsuit. After all, from their point of view, Japanese courts would never accept such litigation, nor would there be a Japanese media frenzy over it.

Actually, there are masochists in every nation, but they are usually a very small minority. In Japan, there are many. Remember that the comfort women controversy wasn't the work of South Koreans, but of Japanese.



## CHAPTER 5: SEX-SLAVE IMAGE RUNS RAMPANT

### **The New Left: masochist demolishers of culture**

Among the various types of leftists in today's world is a breed that condemns its own country. One group that fits this description is the Frankfurt School, named after its base at the University of Frankfurt in Germany. The student members of this New Left group have come out with a new theory of revolution.

The age in which workers unite and overthrow the capitalists is past. Now that we are in an advanced state of capitalism, we must destroy culture as we embrace the information age. Therefore, intellectuals and students are in the mainstream of revolution.

This theory involves destroying the underlying value system of a nation, and bringing about a revolution amid the resulting chaos. This philosophy gained ground among the world's student movements in the 1960s, but did not extend beyond the West. Since the nations of the East cherished their pasts, the old-style communists of the East joined hands with the New Left masochists in the West in opposition to the Vietnam War. The masochists gained strength even in Great Britain, whose textbooks contain extensive accounts of the British exploitation of India.

In the early 1970s, radical groups planted bombs at the offices of Mitsubishi and other major corporations located in Marunouchi, Tokyo. The reason cited for these terrorist acts was the coercive recruiting of Korean workers during World War II.

This huge current swept throughout the world, materializing in various incarnations: the feminist movement and radical environmentalism, to name two. Many young people were involved in these movements. Since they do not fit the description of classic Marxists, they were not as disillusioned as the leftists of the previous generation, even when the Soviet Union crumbled.

They were not Communist Party members. The Vietnamese Communist Party used members of the New Left throughout the world to launch an antiwar movement in the U.S., and emerged victorious.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Chinese Communist Party used the New Left, the destroyers of culture, in its fight for world domination. Since then, Japan-bashing has been relentless, the excuse for it being that Japan has not apologized sufficiently for its past.

We must determine the best way to counter the comfort women controversy in the context of the larger framework that I have just described.

### **Former *Asahi Shimbun* reporter's choice**

Some of the radicals have joined hands with North Korea over the comfort women controversy. In June 2000, Kim Dae-jung and his wife traveled to North Korea for the North-South presidential summit. During his visit, Mrs. Kim met with a North Korean woman

activist and discussed the possibility of a joint North-South approach to the comfort women controversy.

Their conversation resulted in the formation in Pyongyang of a North-South network of activists interested in the comfort women controversy. Other networks have formed as well, involving Dutch and Chinese. Now there is a group in Japan, VAWW-NET (Violence Against Women in War Network Japan), which leans slightly more to the left than the others; it is opposed to the Asia Women's Fund.

The organizer of VAWW-NET is a former *Asahi Shimbun* reporter named Matsui Yayori, who subscribes to the doctrine of the New Left. The objective of Takagi Ken'ichi's group was to compensate former comfort women via the Asia Women's Fund. Farther left than Takagi, Matsui is intent on condemning Japan for its actions during World War II.

Matsui's group held an international tribunal at which Japan's crimes, all attributed to Emperor Showa, were enumerated. They called it the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal, but since there were no defense attorneys, it wasn't a tribunal; it was a kangaroo court similar to those held in revolutionary times. If she and her cronies came into power, they would surely establish a dictatorship whose subjects had no human rights.

They put someone who is no longer of this world on trial. They used the defendant's real name, but didn't afford him the benefit of a defense lawyer. The tribunal was a one-sided denunciation. Their actions demonstrate their total disregard for human rights. VAWW-NET created an international network and held a tribunal — in Tokyo, of all places. To make matters worse, NHK was planning to broadcast the "proceedings" without comment.

NHK executives finally came to their senses right before the tribunal commenced; the programming plan was modified slightly. Even as aired, the program made no mention of the debates that had begun in 1992. NHK cannot claim that its broadcasts are neutral and nonpartisan, because viewers were not informed about the outcome of the debate, or the facts to the extent that they are known.

Nevertheless, the program, just as biased as propaganda, was produced and broadcast. Minimal changes were made when some thought was given to accountability. But then *Asahi Shimbun* reported that program content was altered due to political pressure. The issue became one of politicians pressuring a television network. A much more serious problem, however, is NHK's broadcasting of a program whose message was severely biased and contrary to fact.

### **Japanese attorney takes comfort women controversy to UN**

Meanwhile, Japanese leftists, not content with destroying the Japan-ROK relationship, began focusing on the UN (United Nations). Since the U.S. is a member of the UN Security Council, and members have veto power, topics that are preposterous in nature are not debated there. But other UN organizations are, in fact, seriously flawed, primarily because many of their staff members espouse leftist ideas.

The comfort women controversy was first brought to the attention of the UNCHR (UN Commission on Human Rights) in 1992 by a Japanese attorney named Totsuka Etsuro. On February 25 of that year, Totsuka petitioned the Commission on Human Rights to take up the comfort women controversy. At that time, South Korean activist groups were also submitting petitions and other documents to the UN. However, as representative of an NGO called International Education Development (IED), which is qualified to participate in Commission on Human Rights conferences, Totsuka had the right to speak before the UNHCR. This was the first time the comfort women controversy was broached at the UN.

Totsuka launched an attack on the Japanese government, claiming that comfort women were sex slaves. That was the first entrance of this bizarre equation (comfort women = sex slaves), which also appears in a resolution submitted to the U.S. House of Representatives, into the international arena.

Attempts to win sympathy from the international community for former comfort women would be fruitless if people were told that women were sold into prostitution because of poverty. Totsuka's case needed to be presented as a heinous crime perpetrated by Japan, even if it did not violate international law prevailing before World War II. Totsuka voiced his thoughts in a newsletter entitled "War and Sex," published in 2006.

Because no analysis of the military comfort women controversy had been done in the light of international law, a new one was needed in order to assess it in a legal context. Ultimately, I defined comfort women as sex slaves of Japanese imperialism. I concede that this was an intuitive assessment, but perhaps the victims' accusations may have prompted a paradigm change in my perception of the problem.

Totsuka's sex-slave theory, which arose from his "intuition," was at first dismissed by the UN, for obvious reasons. However, in addition to the UNCHR national delegates, NGOs that fulfill specific conditions are permitted to participate in conferences. Totsuka and his allies, along with South Korean activist groups, took advantage of this system to lobby persistently, year after year to the UNHCR's SPDPM (Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities), as well as the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery.

Human rights specialists at the UN see Japanese coming to conferences year after year, and denouncing their own government. Therefore, they began to think that the comfort women were subjected to truly savage acts.

### **The Coomara-swamy Report**

In 1994, two years after Totsuka's first filing, UNCHR appointed Radhika Coomara-swamy, a citizen of Sri Lanka, special rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

In July 1995, Coomara-swamy did fieldwork in Japan and the two Koreas. In April 1996, the UNCHR accepted Coomara-swamy's "Report on the Mission to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea and Japan on the Issue of Military Sexual Slavery in Wartime."

The report is rife with errors and assumptions. Here is its table of contents.

I. Definition

II. Historical background

III. Working methods and activities of the special rapporteur

IV. Testimonies

V. Position of the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

VI. Position of the government of the Republic of Korea

VII. Position of the government of Japan

VIII. Moral responsibility

IX. Recommendations<sup>66</sup>

In "I. Definitions," the author defines comfort women as "sexual slaves," and it is on that definition that she bases her report. She adopted Totsuka's two-year-old intuition for an official UN document.

6. The Special Rapporteur would like to clarify at the outset of this report that she considers the case of women forced to render sexual services in wartime by and/or for the use of armed forces a practice of military sexual slavery.

(...)

10. Finally, for the purpose of terminology, the Special Rapporteur concurs entirely with the view held by members of the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, as well as by representatives of non-governmental organizations and some academics, that the phrase "comfort women" does not in the least reflect the suffering, such as multiple rapes on an everyday basis and severe physical abuse, that women victims had to endure during their forced prostitution and sexual subjugation and abuse in wartime. The Special Rapporteur, therefore, considers with conviction that the phrase "military sexual slaves" represents a much more accurate and appropriate terminology.

The report begins from this standpoint; eight chapters later, it ends with recommendations for the Japanese government.

(a) Acknowledge that the system of comfort stations set up by the Japanese Imperial Army during the Second World War was a violation of its obligations under international law and accept legal responsibility for that violation;

(b) Pay compensation to individual victims of Japanese military sexual slavery ... .

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<sup>66</sup> Coomara-swamy *Report on the mission to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea and Japan on the issue of military sexual slavery in wartime*  
[http://www.unhcr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/\(Symbol\)/E.CN.4.1996.53.Add.1.En?Opendocument](http://www.unhcr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/E.CN.4.1996.53.Add.1.En?Opendocument)

(c) Make a full disclosure of documents and materials in its possession with regard to comfort stations and other related activities of the Japanese Imperial Army during the Second World War;

(d) Make a public apology in writing to individual women who have come forward and can be substantiated as women victims of Japanese military sexual slavery;

(e) Raise awareness of these issues by amending educational curricula to reflect historical realities;

(f) Identify and punish, as far as possible, perpetrators involved in the recruitment and institutionalization of comfort stations during the Second World War.<sup>67</sup>

Why in the world should Japan be subjected to these vicious “recommendations” from the UN? The answer lies in the fact that the report views the comfort women not as the victims of human traffic resulting from poverty, but as victims of official coercion. Totsuka and company lobbied the UNCHR energetically in favor of this point of view. And because it rests on that point of view, the report describes the comfort women system as an illegal act in violation of international law prevailing at the time of World War II.

The very foundation of the report is a theory (official coercion) that has lost all credibility in Japan after being exhaustively debated (that theory, in turn, is based on the argument that women were told they would be serving in female volunteer corps, and on Yoshida’s confession).

Here is what the report says about recruiting.

27. As already mentioned, this information is, however, abundant in the stories of former “comfort women” and presents a reasonably clear picture. Three types of recruitment are identified: the recruitment of willing women and girls who were already prostitutes; the luring of women with the offer of well-paid work in restaurants or as cooks or cleaners for the army; and, finally, large-scale coercion and violent abduction of women in what amounts to slave raids in countries under Japanese control. [(G. Hicks, “Comfort women, sex slaves of the Japanese Imperial Force”, Heinemann Asia, Singapore, 1995), pp. 20, 21, 22 and generally.]

28. In the quest for more women, private operators working for the military, as well as members of the Korean police force who worked in collaboration with the Japanese, would come to the villages and deceive girls with the promise of well-paid work. Alternatively, in the years preceding 1942, Korean police would arrive in a village recruiting for the “Women’s Voluntary Service Corps.” This made the process official, sanctioned by the Japanese authorities, and it also implied a certain level of compulsion. If the girls recommended as “volunteers” failed to turn up, the kempeitai or military police would investigate their reasons for doing so. In fact, the “Women’s Voluntary Service Corps” gave the Japanese military the opportunity to make use of local Korean operators and police to put pressure on local girls to “join the war effort” under false pretexts, as described above. [Ibid., pp. 23-26 (and elsewhere in the testimonies of the “comfort women” themselves).]

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

29. In cases where even more women were needed, the Japanese military resorted to violence, undisguised force and raids which involved the slaughter of family members who tried to prevent the abduction of their daughters. These methods were facilitated by the strengthening of the National General Mobilization Law, which had been passed in 1938 but was only used for the forcible recruitment of Koreans from 1942 onwards. [Ibid., p. 25] The testimonies of many former military sexual slaves bear witness to the widespread use of violence and coercion in the recruitment process. Moreover, the wartime experiences of one raider, Yoshida Seiji, are recorded in his book, in which he confesses to having been part of slave raids in which, among other Koreans, as many as 1,000 women were obtained for “comfort women” duties under the National Labour Service Association as part of the National General Mobilization Law. [Yoshida Seiji, *My War Crimes: the Forced Draft of Koreans*, Tokyo, 1983.]<sup>68</sup>

### **George Hicks’ worthless book**

The Coomara-swamy report, released as it was in 1996, certainly could have benefited from the debate that had taken place in Japan up to then. Coomara-swamy interviewed Hata Ikuhiko and Yoshimi Yoshiaki about their research. Prof. Hata showed her records of interrogations of Korean comfort women and procurers done by the U.S. military, and told her that there was no employer-employee relationship between the comfort women and the Japanese military. Nevertheless, what she wrote in her report was exactly the opposite: “Dr. Hata also believed that most ‘comfort women’ were under contract with the Japanese army.” Prof. Hata lodged a protest through the Foreign Ministry. He also told Coomara-swamy in detail that Yoshida Seiji is a professional liar, explaining his reasons in detail. Still, she clings to the assumption that Yoshida’s confession is factual.

As the previous citation demonstrates, Coomara-swamy relied almost completely on George Hicks’ *The Comfort Women* for factual information. In “II. Historical background,” there are 11 footnotes. Ten of them cite Hicks’ book and the eleventh Yoshida’s.

Therefore, the report’s credibility rests on the reliability of Hicks’ book. My examination of it reveals that it is a shoddy piece of work. The Hong Kong-based Australian economist reads neither Japanese nor Korean, meaning that neither primary sources nor most of the literature on the subject is accessible to him. Apparently, Hicks acquired 80% of his source material from a North Korean woman residing in Japan.

Just to give one example, Hicks quotes from Yoshida Seiji’s confession as though it were fact. He is not even aware of the refutation in the *Cheju Newspaper*. Hicks also cites a book by Kim Il-myon, a resident of Japan with North Korean sympathies, many times. However, most of Kim’s assertions are unverified rumors. Japanese specialists have deemed his book unworthy of their attention.

Hicks completely ignores the considerable research on comfort women done in Japan. He simply had the rumors conveyed to him translated into English and included them in his book without comment.

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<sup>68</sup> Coomara-swamy, *op. cit.*

Like Hicks, Coomara-swamy reads neither Korean nor Japanese. When she was working on her report, there was very little material available in English on the comfort women controversy. That, however, is no excuse for the special rapporteur's relying solely on one book in English on the controversy, which inspired a heated debate among Japanese and South Korean specialists. Even Prof. Yoshimi wrote a letter to Coomara-swamy urging her to remove portions referring to Hicks' book and Yoshida's confession.

Coomara-swamy's work is slipshod; she presumes that there was official coercion and defines comfort women as sex slaves. We are left dumbstruck by her highhanded recommendations to the Japanese government: acknowledge that it violated international law, pay compensation to individuals, and punish anyone associated with the comfort women system. She reached her conclusion (sex slaves) first, and then collected resources that jibed with it.

### **North Korean propaganda presented as fact**

Another influence on Coomara-swamy's report that we must not overlook is the North Korean government, which was enthusiastically helpful in providing information. In June 1992, former comfort women living in North Korea began coming forward. The North Korean government demanded apologies and compensation for North Korean comfort women, since they had been offered to South Koreans. When Coomara-swamy visited North Korea, the government told her, "Japan used force to recruit 200,000 North Korean women as sex slaves, subjected them to brutal sexual abuse, and then killed most of them." These accusations of crimes against humanity and mass murders in violation of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide were described in the report as the official stance of the North Korean government. The part about Japan's killing the great majority of 200,000 comfort women is total nonsense, but we must take it seriously because it was included in an official UN report. In North Korea political propaganda carries far more weight than historical research or diplomacy. The report contains the following improbable testimony of a former North Korean comfort woman.

54. The testimony of Chong Ok Sun, who is now 74 years old, reflects in particular the brutal and harsh treatment that these women had to endure in addition to sexual assault and daily rape by soldiers of the Japanese Imperial Army:

One day in June, at the age of 13, ... I went to the village well to fetch water. A Japanese garrison soldier surprised me there and took me away, so that my parents never knew what had happened to their daughter. I was taken to the police station in a truck, where I was raped by several policemen. (...) The head of the police station hit me in my left eye because I was crying. That day I lost my eyesight in the left eye.

(...) There were around 400 other Korean young girls with me and we had to serve over 5,000 Japanese soldiers as sex slaves every day — up to 40 men per day.

(...) One Korean girl who was with us once demanded why we had to serve so many, up to 40, men per day. To punish her for her questioning, the Japanese company commander Yamamoto ordered her to be beaten with a sword. While we were watching, they took off her clothes, tied her legs and hands and rolled her over a board with nails ... . In the end, they cut off her head. Another Japanese, Yamamoto, told us that "it's easy to kill you all, easier than

killing dogs.” He also said “since those Korean girls are crying because they have not eaten, boil the human flesh and make them eat it.”

One Korean girl caught a venereal disease from being raped so often and, as a result, over 50 Japanese soldiers were infected. In order to stop the disease from spreading and to “sterilize” the Korean girl, they stuck a hot iron bar in her private parts.

Once they took 40 of us on a truck far away to a pool filled with water and snakes. The soldiers beat several of the girls, shoved them into the water, heaped earth into the pool and buried them alive.

I think over half of the girls who were at the garrison barracks were killed. Twice I tried to run away, but both times we were caught after a few days. We were tortured even more and I was hit on my head so many times that all the scars still remain. They also tattooed me on the inside of my lips, my chest, my stomach and my body.<sup>69</sup>

I found the simple act of copying this material nauseating, but Coomara-swamy accepts Chong’s testimony unconditionally, without doing any fact-checking. She adds:

52. At the outset, the Special Rapporteur wishes to extend her sincere gratitude to all women victims who had the courage to speak to her and give their testimonies, although this meant, without doubt, the reliving of the most humiliating and painful moments in their lives.

53. (...) The following testimonies have been selected to illustrate the various aspects of the phenomenon of military sexual slavery, leading the Special Rapporteur to believe that such military sexual slavery was conducted in a systematic and coercive manner by and with the knowledge of leaders of the Japanese Imperial Army.<sup>70</sup>

Another problem that must be addressed is the Japanese government’s failure to issue a meaningful rebuttal concerning the factual errors in the report.

In *The Comfort Women and Sex in Battle Zones* Hata Ikuhiko writes that in March 1996, when the UNCHR was deliberating Coomara-swamy’s report, Japan’s Foreign Ministry submitted a 40-page rebuttal entitled “The Japanese Government’s Position.”

The rebuttal stated that the neutrality of the Yoshida and Hicks books, on which Coomara-swamy had relied heavily, was doubtful. But the government suddenly withdrew the document without disclosing its content. In its place was submitted a pro-forma document entitled “The Japanese Government’s Policy concerning the ‘Comfort Women’ Controversy,” which does not examine historical fact.

The UN special rapporteur intentionally used horrific terms like “sex slaves” in her report, which is a direct attack on the Japanese government. But even under attack, all the Japanese government did was withdraw its mordant rebuttal, which dealt with specifics; it then apologized via the Kono Statement, in which it acknowledged moral responsibility, and explained at great length about reparations paid to victims via the Asia Women’s Fund. The

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<sup>69</sup> Coomara-swamy, *op. cit.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*



conventional wisdom of the international community is that if you don't issue a rebuttal, you have acknowledged the accusations.

Meanwhile, North Korea responded to Japanese censure in connection with the abductions of Japanese citizens at the UN and other venues, as follows: "Prior to World War II, Japan forced 200,000 Korean women to become sex slaves." The Foreign Ministry's response to that accusation was only, "The numbers are inflated. Japan has already apologized." But there was no rebuttal.

It is not surprising that diplomats from other nations, upon hearing this exchange, believe that if North Korea inflated the figures, then Japan must have forced about half that number, or 100,000 Korean women, into sex slavery.

### **"Sex slave" lies infiltrate U.S. House of Representatives**

In fact, by September 13, 2006, the U.S. House of Representatives had already adopted a resolution condemning Japan in connection with the comfort women controversy at the committee level. The House Committee on International Relations (now Committee on Foreign Affairs), headed by (former) Rep. Henry Hyde, voted unanimously in favor of the resolution (H. Res. 759).

This resolution was first submitted jointly by Rep. Lane Evans (Democrat) and Christopher Smith (Republican). Both Smith and Hyde are leading conservative congressmen, and both have been very sympathetic to the North Korean abduction problem. In 2005, the House of Representatives adopted a resolution condemning North Korea in connection with that very problem. Its passage was due to Hyde's strong leadership. In April 2006, Rep. Smith chaired a hearing at the House of Representatives, at which Yokota Sakie, mother of abductee Yokota Megumi, and Prof. Shimada Yoichi, chairman of NARKN (National Association for the Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea) testified.

In September 2006 the situation was very serious. But even *Sankei Shimbun* carried only a brief article; the other leading dailies, nothing at all.

Two resolutions relating to the comfort women were submitted (in 2001 and 2005). But for various reasons, including lobbying on the part of the Japanese Embassy, they were never put to a vote. But in September 2006, *The People's Korea*, the newspaper issued by Chosen Soren, wrote about the reappearance of the resolution as follows: "Since April, the resolution nearly died due to lobbying by Japanese government representatives, but interest in it grew due to the activities of the elderly victims, their supporters and our compatriots in the U.S. The media in South Korea have given this matter a great deal of coverage, and are demanding that the Japanese government submit to the resolution." This suggests a joint effort on the part of the South Korean left wing and North Korea to lobby the Americans.

In September 2006, I sensed an impending crisis. I felt that if I didn't do something, the resolution would pass. Here again, if the Japanese government did not present an official rebuttal, it would be sending the message that the accusations in the resolution are true. That is certainly what members of Congress would think, even pro-Japan conservatives. Fearing that these machinations would succeed in weakening the Japan-U.S. alliance, I wrote the

following rebuttal, which appeared in the September 29 edition of the *Sankei Shimbun*, on the editorial page, with my name on it.

I send heartfelt greetings to my friends in the U.S. Congress who believe in freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law — universal principles of humankind, and who are committed to the diffusion of those principles throughout the world.

The Japanese government, and the Japanese people, who believe in those same universal principles of humankind, and who are allies of your nation, were extremely shocked to hear that the Committee on International Relations passed a resolution condemning the Japanese government in connection with the comfort women controversy (H. Res. 759). The criticism of the Japanese government in the resolution is based on anti-Japanese propaganda that has absolutely no basis in fact.

To be specific, the resolution begins as follows:

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the Government of Japan should formally acknowledge and accept responsibility for its sexual enslavement of young women, known to the world as “comfort women,” during its colonial occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II, and for other purposes.<sup>71</sup>

This statement has absolutely no basis in fact. Since the 1990s, the comfort women have been the subject of a contentious debate in Japan. The debate has also become a diplomatic controversy between Japan and South Korea. The Japanese government has conducted an exhaustive examination of official documents and other resources from the past, and in the private sector, scholars have also done extensive research. Consequently, we have determined that there is no factual basis whatsoever for the claim that there was coercion of comfort women by government or military authorities.

A statement issued by the Japanese government in 1993 (known as the Kono Statement) contains the following language: “The Government study has revealed that in many cases [the comfort women] were recruited against their own will, through coaxing, coercion, etc., and that, at times, administrative/military personnel directly took part in the recruitments.” This portion refers to war crimes committed by military personnel at an outpost in Java, Indonesia. The perpetrators abducted a Dutch woman and forced her to work as a prostitute, against her will and without permission from military headquarters. The Allies tried five soldiers and four civilians as war criminals; some were executed, and others sentenced to prison.

The Kono Statement also expresses the government’s regret and acknowledgement of moral responsibility for the suffering endured by many women who were obliged to provide sex services to Japanese military personnel during the age of imperialism when ethnic self-determination and dignity were not recognized.

The Japanese government has stated its regret for having caused Koreans to suffer during its annexation of Korea, and has vowed never to repeat its mistake. It has also apologized to the comfort women for the suffering they endured. These sentiments have not changed.

To evade responsibility for its abduction of private citizens, Kim Jong-il’s North Korean terrorist government has launched an energetic political propaganda campaign at the United

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<sup>71</sup> <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/billtext.xpd?bill=hr109-759>

Nations and elsewhere, claiming that the Japanese government coerced 200,000 Korean women into becoming sex slaves. We are horrified that the House Committee on International Relations has adopted a resolution containing virtually the same charges as those made by the North Koreans, who must be cheering at their success in weakening the Japan-U.S. alliance.

I urge you to strengthen the bonds between Japan and the U.S., and between the nations of the world that cherish freedom and democracy, by affording Japan an opportunity to disclose the results of research conducted in Japan, via open hearings or similar proceedings. Until that occurs, we urge you to postpone deliberation of said resolution in the House of Representatives.

After the midterm elections were held in November, a new Congress was sworn in. Resolution 759 had been passed by the Committee on International Relations, but never progressed any further. However, in January 2007, Rep. Mike Honda submitted a new resolution.

The resolution debated in the House of Representatives is based largely on the Coomara-swamy report. Here are the four demands in the resolution submitted by Mike Honda.

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that the Government of Japan —

(1) should formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for its Imperial Armed Force=s coercion of young women into sexual slavery, known to the world as “comfort women,” during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II;

(2) should have this official apology given as a public statement presented by the Prime Minister of Japan in his official capacity;

(3) should clearly and publicly refute any claims that the sexual enslavement and trafficking of the “comfort women” for the Japanese Imperial Armed Forces never occurred; and

(4) should educate current and future generations about this horrible crime while following the recommendations of the international community with respect to the “comfort women.”<sup>72</sup>

The first demand borrows the term “sexual slavery” directly from Coomara-swamy, who used it because she believes that it is “a much more accurate and appropriate terminology” than “comfort women.”<sup>73</sup>

The “recommendations of the international community” in the fourth demand must certainly include the Coomara-swamy report.

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<sup>72</sup> <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/billtext.xpd?bill=hr110-121>

<sup>73</sup> Coomara-swamy, *op. cit.*

It is also obvious that Coomara-swamy's basic position, i.e., that comfort women were sex slaves, has been adopted for the resolution.

The Coomara-swamy Report uses the term "sexual slavery," and recognizes as fact Yoshida Seiji's testimony, the abduction of women under the pretext of serving in the female volunteer corps, and the testimony of Chong Ok-sun. In that case, we must conclude that the first demand in House Resolution 121 is based on those same assumptions.

The "sex slave" argument, submitted to the United Nations by a Japanese lawyer in 1992, is on the point of becoming conventional wisdom in the U.S. House of Representatives. Rep. Honda's resolution acknowledges the following description of the comfort women system as fact.

Whereas the "comfort women" system of forced military prostitution by the Government of Japan, considered unprecedented in its cruelty and magnitude, included gang rape, forced abortions, humiliation, and sexual violence resulting in mutilation, death, or eventual suicide in one of the largest cases of human trafficking in the 20th century;<sup>74</sup>

The Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment (under the Committee on Foreign Affairs)<sup>75</sup> is deliberating H. Res. 121. On February 15, 2007, that subcommittee invited former comfort women from South Korea and the Netherlands to testify at a hearing. At that hearing, the submitters of the resolution made the following statement.

Some may say the past is the past and that the US is also an offender and violator of human rights. Maybe this is so. But nowhere in recorded history has the US military as a matter of policy issued a directive allowing for the coercion of young women into sexual slavery or forced prostitution.<sup>76</sup>

Rep. Honda and his colleagues really believe that all comfort women were sex slaves conscripted directly by the Japanese military. In April 2006, the Congressional Research Service issued a report entitled "Japanese Military's 'Comfort Women.'" Rep. Honda referred to this report. At the beginning of the report, the author cites none other than Yoshida Seiji's book.<sup>77</sup>

But the Japanese government presented no rebuttal to the "sex slave" argument posited by the Coomara-swamy report and crafted from Yoshida's confession and the ridiculous testimony of the North Korean former comfort woman. Therefore, it is entirely possible that that

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<sup>74</sup> <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/billtext.xpd?bill=hr110-121>

<sup>75</sup> The name of this committee was ACommittee on International Relations@ from 1995-2007.

<sup>76</sup> Statement of the Eni F. H. Faleomavaega (Democrat), non-voting delegate to the U. S. House of Representatives representing American Samoa, and chairman of the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment, <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/faleo021507.htm>

<sup>77</sup> The CRS issued a second report in April 2007, after objections to the Honda resolution from Prime Minister Abe. That report does not include any mention of Yoshida. The Americans will investigate in response to a rebuttal. However, the text of Honda's resolution, written before the second CRS report was issued, was never amended.

argument will be debated formally in the Congress of the U.S., Japan's ally, and that a resolution demanding a formal apology from the Japanese government will be adopted.

## CHAPTER 6: ATTACKS ON JAPAN BEGIN

### **Rabid anti-Abe campaign**

In my rebuttal to the U.S. Congress, published in September 2006, I requested an opportunity to describe the results of research conducted in Japan, via open hearings or similar proceedings. However, only the “official coercion” position was presented at the biased hearing held on February 15, 2007.

Under normal circumstances, an official from the Japanese Embassy would have been there to explain how much the truth had been distorted in the minds of Honda and his colleagues, and in the reports on which they based their actions: the report prepared by CRS and the Coomara-swamy report. Alternatively, someone could have asked a civilian specialist, like me, to lobby the U.S. Congress. However, only those who espouse the sex-slave argument were invited.

Remember that in the international community today, accusations are believed unless they are contested.

Every army has operated facilities designed to help its soldiers to obtain sexual release. Where there were no such facilities, there were rapes, such as those for which the Soviet troops are so well known, committed in Manchuria and North Korea, and wherever else they went. American soldiers committed rapes, too, immediately after they occupied Japan. The Americans used brothels, which they ordered the Japanese government to establish.

South Korean troops (and yes, I detect the irony), operated brothels during the Vietnam War. Why is Japan alone censured in a U.S. House of Representatives resolution? This question is asked increasingly by the Japanese, more and more of whom now harbor anti-American sentiments.

On March 5, 2007, Prime Minister Abe stated before Japan’s Diet that the premise on which the resolution is based is contrary to fact, and that he would not apologize even if it were passed, in the following exchange.

**Rep. Ogawa Toshio (Democratic Party):** What are your feelings about the Kono Statement?

**Prime Minister Abe:** In principle, I intend to stand by it.

**Ogawa:** Recently, you stated that there was no official coercion in the recruiting of comfort women.

**Abe:** No evidence has been found that indicates coercion in the narrow sense. There was no coercion of the sort where officials forced their way into houses and abducted women.

**Ogawa:** At the U.S. Congress, former comfort women testified that they had been coerced.

**Abe:** There is no proof that there was coercion by government or military authorities, for instance in so-called “slave hunts.” There was coercion in the broad sense, meaning on the

part of procurers, who were the middlemen. The resolution submitted to the U.S. Congress misstates the facts.

**Ogawa:** The blame for the misstatement of facts lies with the U.S. Congress, then? Can Japan simply ignore this resolution, without issuing any apology whatsoever?

**Abe:** We will not apologize simply because the resolution was adopted. The resolution is not based on fact, nor does it take into account the Japanese government's past efforts.<sup>78</sup>

The media's response to this exchange was to vilify Abe, labeling him as a revisionist and glorifier of militarism. In fact, Abe Shinzo is the secretary-general of a group of Diet representatives concerned about history education, as described earlier. This is the same group that held a hearing, to which specialists on the subject were invited, to determine whether there was indeed official coercion of comfort women. In attendance, in addition to myself, were Yoshimi, Fujioka, Kono Yohei, and Ishihara Nobuo (former deputy chief Cabinet secretary). After that hearing, it should have been clear to Abe that there had been no official coercion. He even asked, at a Diet session, if the Kono Statement should be revised.

Running parallel to this was the debate about the abductions of Japanese citizens by North Korean agents. At issue then was whether Japanese nationals had actually been abducted. Abe Shinzo took the position that they indeed had been, and that pressure should be put on North Korea. In fact, North Korea did admit to the abductions, and five of the abductees were finally allowed to return to Japan. That success helped propel Abe into the prime minister's office. Those who attack Japan in connection with the comfort women controversy seem to be extremely worried when forces trying to break through the darkness seize the reins of government. *Asahi Shimbun* seems particularly desperate, and has responded by finding fault with Abe's historical perspective.

When the LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) presidential election was being held, *Asahi Shimbun* was relentless, trotting out Kato Koichi and others wishing to criticize Abe. The paper piled on accusation after accusation: Abe's historical perspective being what it is, Japan-U.S. relations will deteriorate; Abe rejects the Tokyo Trials; his pilgrimages to Yasukuni Shrine are his way of demonstrating his rejection of the IMTFE, and have caused concern in the U.S.; and Abe's historical perspective, which exalts prewar Japan, will jeopardize not only Japan's relations with China, but also with the U.S.

Soon after he was elected prime minister, Abe was barraged with questions about his opinion of the Kono Statement. He replied that he would stand by it, and that there was coercion in the broad sense, but not in the narrow sense.

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<sup>78</sup> *Sankei Shimbun*, 06 March 2007.

## **American conservatives convinced that comfort women were sex slaves**

Soon U.S. newspapers were reporting that unlike previous prime ministers, Abe was attempting to overturn Japan's apology — the Kono Statement.

Then there was an outcry about how Japan was appealing for the recognition of the human rights of its own citizens, while closing its eyes to its own horrific infringements on the human rights of the people of other nations. In other words, what Prime Minister Abe was attempting to revise history, like the Neo-Nazis, which flies in the face of universal human rights. Abe and the U.S. do not share the same value system. This is the direction the campaign is taking, and we would be foolish to underestimate it.

What is especially worrisome, as Prof. Shimada Yoichi of Fukui Prefectural University has been warning us for two or three years now, is that even American conservatives are seriously misinformed about historical issues. They believe that there actually were sex slaves. Even the conservatives who were extremely helpful to Japan in connection with the North Korean abductions believe that there was official coercion of comfort women.

Some conservatives have been heard to make comments like the following: "Some condemn the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but that was the right thing to do. Dropping those bombs put an end to the rapes of comfort women, which were being committed at that very moment."

A book published in 2004 and written by a North Korea expert whom American conservatives respect propounds the argument that comfort women were victims of official coercion and murder. That book is *Separated at Birth: How North Korea Became the Evil Twin*, and the author is Gordon Cucullu, a former Green Beret. Prof. Shimada's review of the book appeared in *Gendai Koria*.<sup>79</sup>

First, Cucullu refers to the comfort women as members of a "body donating corps" whose customers, Japanese officers and rank-and-file soldiers, were instructed to treat them as "brutally and impersonally as possible and under no circumstances to form a friendly or loving relationship with them."<sup>80</sup>

What made the practice even more heinous was that the Japanese intentionally sought young women, girls really, in the twelve-to-sixteen-year-old range to be comfort women. They targeted this age group because they knew in the strict, somewhat puritanical Korean society girls this age were more than likely to be virgins and therefore not infected with venereal disease. In the days before modern medical care and antibiotics disease was more feared in many instances than combat injuries, and venereal disease could produce debilitating, occasionally fatal results. Consequently, the goal of the Japanese teams sent out to kidnap women was to capture them as young and as sound as possible. Although women were sent to the mobile prostitution units from virtually every country and land conquered by Japan, the

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<sup>79</sup> *Gendai Koria* (Modern Korea), September 2005.

<sup>80</sup> Gordon Cucullu, *Separated at Birth: How North Korea Became the Evil Twin*, (Guilford, Connecticut: The Lyons Press, 2004, p. 89.



largest number by far came from Korea. An exact count is impossible to obtain but reasonable, realistic estimates based on the number of Japanese troops deployed and on records recently discovered in Japanese files dating from the period indicate that upwards of two hundred thousand Korean women may have been kidnapped and sent out to be comfort women. Even one would be too many, but this is a mind-numbing number.

Most of the comfort women did not survive the war. Far too many died of abuse and disease contracted from the troops. Some committed suicide when the opportunity presented itself, knowing full well that they would not be welcome back in their homes. There was no return for these women in their society; this was truly the end of the road. In most cases the retreating Japanese army simply executed them before abandoning a position. They rid themselves of the evidence so to speak.

Predictably but sadly those few women survivors returned to a world that rejected them. They were a living, visible symbol to Korean men that they were incapable of performing a man's most basic, essential task in his society: keeping his women safe. That they could not do this caused Korean men to be angry at the Japanese but also, irrationally, at the women themselves. As a result, the entire issue of the comfort women was tacitly ignored for the most part by Korean people who did not wish the shame to be brought up and by the Japanese who were, and remain, in deep denial. It was not until the few surviving women passed age sixty that they could no longer keep their torment bottled up inside and created a huge, justifiable, and long overdue fuss.<sup>81</sup>

It is difficult to believe that a conservative scholar would write in this way, but this one did. Of course, if you probe deeply enough, you will find some conservatives who regret having said that the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was a good thing. But the sex-slave argument (a gift from Japan's leftists) cancels out that regret. Shimada says the situation is as bad as it seems.

As already described, the U.S. House Committee on International Relations passed a resolution relating to comfort women in September 2006. At that time, the committee was chaired by Rep. Henry Hyde, who retired when his term expired in that same year. A prominent conservative, Hyde was extremely critical of North Korea. He paid close attention to human rights-related problems there, and to abductions of Japanese citizens by North Koreans. Rep. Hyde was one of the major forces that enabled the mother of Yokota Megumi (one of the abductees) to travel to the U.S. and testify at a hearing at the House of Representatives in April 2006. When delegates from the AVKN (Association of the Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea) or the NARKN (National Association for the Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea) travel to the U.S., Hyde has always been willing to meet with them. Since the chairman of the House Committee on International Relations addresses problems of diplomacy affecting the world's nations, legislators from all over the world seek audiences with him. However, the chairman does not meet with ordinary legislators, only those of ministerial rank. But Hyde was willing to meet with delegates from the two aforementioned groups about twice a year. Furthermore, it was he who submitted a resolution condemning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for the abductions and continued captivity of citizens of the Republic of Korea and Japan as acts of terrorism and gross violations of human rights, which was approved by the House on July 11, 2005.

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

Masumoto Teruaki (secretary-general of the AVKN) and Shimada Yoichi (vice-chairman of the NARKN) visited the U.S. in April 2005, and met with Rep. Hyde, as usual. When Hyde asked if there was anything he could do for them, Shimada replied, "Could you introduce a resolution stating that the resolution of the abduction problem is imperative?" Hyde assured him that he would, but advised Shimada not to say anything about the matter to the State Department, which might object.

Dennis Halpin was one of Rep. Hyde's aides. Halpin and Shimada kept in touch after the former returned to Japan.

Yokota Megumi was abducted at the age of 13. She is not on the list of abductees officially recognized by the Japanese government. Nor was a young man named Terakoshi Takeshi, also kidnapped in the 1960s at the age of 13. Halpin suggested that the U.S. take the lead by publicizing the kidnappings of those two teenagers, which Japan had not yet recognized. He also stated his wish to include the abductions of South Koreans in the resolution, which was drafted, submitted, and approved.

We felt it was important to have the Americans on our side on this issue. We also wanted them to be well-informed, which is why we prepared reference material about the abductions for them in English. We began visiting the U.S. in 2001.

At first we were unable to meet with members of the House of Representatives. We began by meeting with their aides and submitting our English-language material to the Congressional Research Service. Ultimately, we met with the President to obtain permission to testify at a hearing.

### **Leftist groups also lobby U.S. Congress**

Dennis Halpin is very sensitive to human rights problems, but his wife happens to be Korean. Those who would have you believe that the comfort women were sex slaves were working hard to further their "cause." Halpin was approached, as was Rep. Hyde, by the proponents of the resolution concerning comfort women. The leftists had been just as active as we had.

Additionally, left-leaning Korean-American groups had established a presence in the U.S. In South Korea, leftists had made great headway, with two consecutive left-leaning administrations (headed by Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun). And behind them were ethnic Chinese-American groups that maintained close ties with the PRC government. (These are the same groups that had been running campaigns in connection with the so-called Nanking Massacre.)

For the past 10 years, these elements have gained momentum, and have succeeded in drawing Americans' attention to Japanese historical issues. For instance, they instituted suit in American courts on behalf of former conscripted laborers, their objective being to extract reparations from Japanese companies doing business in the U.S. One of the standard-bearers of this movement was Rep. Mike Honda.

In August 1999, Honda (then a California State assemblyman) submitted a resolution designed to approve the payment of reparations. The State Assembly approved it, and in March 2001, it was submitted to the U.S. House of Representatives in the form of legislation. The Department of State and other U.S. government entities took the position that the matter was settled via the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1952.

Even so, Honda & Co. were attempting to extract compensation from Japanese corporations by changing the interpretation of the treaty. But the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 called attention to the importance of the American relationship with Japan. The campaign came to an abrupt halt.

However, more groups formed in the U.S. — groups that equated prewar Japan with Nazi Germany, and demanded compensation (which had already been provided for in the aforementioned treaty) and apologies from Japan's prime ministers.

South Koreans residing in the U.S. were behind movements relating to the comfort women, but Rep. Honda had been attempting to address that issue for quite some time. According to a report in *Sankei Shimbun*, Honda had received substantial financial contributions from Chinese groups.

But an even more serious problem had arisen elsewhere. As already described, about three years ago, Shimada Yoichi noted that an increasing number of American conservatives had espoused the argument that comfort women were sex slaves.

The number of resolutions submitted to the U.S. Congress each year is huge. Since resolutions are not legally binding, committee chairs have the authority to decide which to deliberate and which to ignore. In September 2006, under Henry Hyde's leadership, a resolution concerning comfort women (H. Res. 759) was passed by unanimous consent. The sex-slave argument proponents had gotten to Chairman Hyde.

Note that the 2006 resolution and the current resolution won the approval of Republicans as well as Democrats, and more congresspersons vote for it each time. Even anticommunist, conservative legislators who are concerned about human rights, and who support the Abe administration's policies on those points approve of the comfort women resolutions.

At the U.N. and anywhere else they can find an audience, the North Koreans say, "Japan is using the abductions for political purposes. If the Japanese care about human rights, they should first resolve the problem of 200,000 sex slaves."

This is the sort of stance North Korea always assumes, not only toward Japan, but also toward the international community. What is worse, the U.S. Congress may soon endorse these North Korean lies.

In October 2006, I went to New York with AVKN vice-chairman Iizuka Shigeo and secretary-general Masumoto, and NARKN vice-chairman Shimada. We visited the United Nations, where we met with representatives of permanent member nations and the 12 nations whose citizens are known to have been abducted by North Koreans. We explained to them how very serious the abduction problem was, and asked for their help in convincing the Security Council to impose more stringent sanctions on North Korea. At that time, the

General Assembly was the scene of deliberations on a resolution condemning North Korea for its human rights abuses, which included the abductions. Therefore, we also asked the people with whom we met to support that resolution. We had the opportunity to spend a day observing deliberations over the resolution in the General Assembly.

### **Japan's incompetent diplomats**

Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly are first deliberated by a committee. Committees are very large bodies in which all member nations participate. The Third Committee handles problems relating to human rights. It was sessions of that committee, attended by all member nations, that we observed.

Japan's ambassador to the U.N. was the first to speak.

“The families of abductees are here with us today, but the abduction problem has still not been resolved. North Korea sent human remains to Japan, claiming that they belonged to Japanese abductees; they did not. Furthermore, the North Koreans refuse to enter into talks regarding this matter.”

North Korea issued the following rebuttal:

“The abduction problem has been resolved, thanks to the good offices of General Kim Jong-il. All those still alive have been returned to Japan. This matter is closed. How dare Japan, the perpetrator of far more serious infringements of human rights, claim that this problem has not been resolved, when it has done nothing about those infringements? This is typical Japanese behavior.”

This outburst was followed by the enumeration of “unsolved problems,” i.e., the abduction of eight million persons, massacres that claimed two million victims, and the coercion of 200,000 women into sexual slavery, which unfolded in front of our very eyes. These words were uttered in the presence of all member nations.

The Japanese ambassador took the floor a second time. The more I listened to him, the more discouraged I became. He clearly hadn't taken the care to craft a convincing response.

“The figure of 200,000 is exaggerated. Furthermore, Japan has already issued apologies in connection with these problems.”

I wouldn't be surprised if the people listening to him say “200,000 is an exaggeration” went away believing that perhaps there were something like 100,000 sex slaves. They would also think that the Japanese had coerced women into sexual slavery, because the speaker said that apologies had already been issued.

The Japanese ambassador's rejoinder was so weak that it may even have lent credence to the North Korean accusations. It contained not even a hint of the outcome of the debate that we had launched in Japan in 1992.

## **U.S. media bash Abe and Japan**

Articles critical of Prime Minister Abe in connection with the House resolution began appearing in U.S. newspapers. Some of the articles seemed to equate the abductions and the comfort women, casting suspicion on Abe's stance on the abductions. American newspapers were actually parroting the accusations against Japan aired in the North Korean rebuttal at the United Nations. By way of example, here is an excerpt from an editorial that appeared in the *Washington Post* in March 2007.

Mr. Abe has a right to complain about Pyongyang's stonewalling. What's odd — and offensive — is his parallel campaign to roll back Japan's acceptance of responsibility for the abduction, rape and sexual enslavement of tens of thousands of women during World War II.<sup>82</sup>

How do we explain this unhappy state of affairs? I don't think the answer is that Americans are anti-Japanese or ignorant of Japan. Nor do I believe they are attempting to shove their perception of history, heavily colored by the Tokyo Trials, down our throats. No, this is our problem. Japan's attempts to counter the various accusations have failed miserably.

As stated earlier, I am convinced that we were victorious in the debate in Japan, though some may argue that it was not decisive. And even those Japanese who proudly wear hair shirts can no longer claim that there was official coercion in the narrow sense.

However, North Korean claims (that there was official coercion in the narrow sense and that the Japanese forced women to become sex slaves) are spreading throughout the world at an alarming rate. They have even been reproduced in a U.N. report. It is the duty of Japanese diplomatic officers to contest accusations that are untrue.

Japan has never acknowledged official coercion in the narrow sense. No government representative has ever said, "At that time, it was not uncommon for young women from poor families to be sold into prostitution, and in that sense, their human rights were violated. Our hearts go out to those victims of poverty." Instead, we hear, "Japan has already apologized. In addition, we have been paying compensation via the Asia Women's Fund." Since we have not communicated the facts in our rebuttals, an increasing number of people have come to believe that there actually were sex slaves.

There are reasons for the criticism of Abe in the U.S. media. When the "comfort women" resolution was passed by the Committee on International relations in September 2006, Japan's Foreign Ministry responded to the prime minister's strong wishes by moving to block a vote on it by the full U.S. House of Representatives. The House adjourned before the resolution came to a vote.

But in January 2007, with a new Congress after midterm elections, Rep. Honda resubmitted the comfort women resolution. This time, the Foreign Ministry launched a more concerted lobbying campaign, which began in February and ran through March.

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<sup>82</sup> *Washington Post*, 24 March 2007.

In February, letters signed by Ambassador Kato Ryozo were sent to each congressperson. Ambassador Kato held a press conference at which he emphasized the factual errors in the resolution. And what about those factual errors? The resolution includes a demand that the Japanese government apologize, but Japan's prime ministers had already apologized any number of times. Attached to the aforementioned letter were documents, among them the Kono Statement, information about the Asia Women's Fund, and apologies issued by Japan's prime ministers.

His rebuttal was, essentially: "You can see how many times we've apologized. Why do we need to apologize further?" He did not say that among the factual errors were descriptions of comfort women as sex slaves. He did not say that there was no official coercion. He did not touch upon any of the topics that had been debated in Japan. All he said was that the Japanese government had already apologized.

On March 5, at just about the time when attention had been drawn to the ambassador's letter, Prime Minister Abe delivered a speech at the Diet. In it, he said:

No government or military authorities ever broke into houses and kidnapped women. There is no evidence to the effect that there was anything resembling officially sanctioned "comfort women hunts." The U.S. House of Representatives' resolution misstates the facts.

We are not going to apologize simply because the resolution was adopted. The resolution is certainly not based on fact, and does not recognize the efforts made by the Japanese government to date.

From the Americans' point of view, Ambassador Kato was saying that Japan's prime ministers have continually issued apologies. But the new prime minister, Abe Shinzo, is saying that he won't apologize because of misstatements of fact. In that case, isn't the ambassador contradicting the prime minister? The Americans suspect Abe of opposing Japan's previous stance and begin to believe that perhaps the resolution was necessary after all. Perhaps they should vote for it.

Furthermore, criticism of Japan in the U.S. media has been mounting. Only Prime Minister Abe based his counterargument on the facts; the Foreign Ministry never mentioned them. In fact, the Foreign Ministry has handled this problem so poorly that Abe, having veered from the position of previous administrations, is now suspected of revisionist views, and of wishing to glorify the militarism of the past.

The ministry did come up with a strategy. But it was the same old strategy, and it didn't even begin to address the facts. Instead of putting out the fire, it added fuel to it.

### **How to stop resolutions condemning Japan**

Resolutions approved by the U.S. House of Representatives have no legal force. The resolution in question is only one of many thousands submitted each year. One could argue that the best course of action is to shrug it off and wait until it is forgotten. But the resolution will remain in official records, and the North Koreans are sure to use it as ammunition against Japan. I can just hear them saying, "in accordance with the resolution passed by the U.S. Congress."

Therefore, we must not underestimate the resolution's effect. Even more worrisome, as I have indicated again and again, is the fact that the sex-slave argument in the resolution and other misrepresentations of fact have gained credence even among American conservatives.

We must take action, and expeditiously so, to clear up global misinterpretation of the comfort women controversy. I have made the following proposal at every possible opportunity, ever since Honda submitted his resolution.

#### A Proposal for Clearing up International Misunderstandings Concerning Comfort Women

I call upon the chief cabinet secretary or the prime minister to issue a new statement, one that outlines the Japanese government's current perception of the comfort women issue. Along those same lines, we must launch a massive, systematic campaign in which the government, the Diet and private citizens join hands in exposing and correcting the falsehoods that have been spread.

The new statement would define the Kono Statement as one that "fails to provide adequate explanations, contains language that invites misinterpretation, and is inconsistent with the results of subsequent research and, therefore, outdated."

Justifying the issuance of a new statement are sustained international attention to the issue, e.g., advancements in research relating to comfort women, a report issued by the UN Commission on Human Rights, and resolutions submitted to the U.S. Congress.

The new statement would emphasize the fact that no evidence of official coercion in the narrow sense has been uncovered, while affirming that the government's compassion for and empathy toward those who were forced to serve as comfort women against their will (coercion in the broad sense) remain unchanged.

Our international public-relations campaign should stress the fact that our nation stands on universal human values, i.e., freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. We must reveal to the world that behind baseless anti-Japanese propaganda are leftist totalitarian elements intent on using political maneuvering to destroy the friendship between Japan and the U.S. Additionally, we must make every effort to avoid behavior that would label us as ultra-rightists who long for a revival of militarism.

We must tell the world that both Japan's public and private sectors are working to combat unceasing violations of human rights, including the abduction of our citizens, by Kim Jong-il's government and its pillar of support, the Chinese Communist Party. The North Koreans and Chinese attack Japan, dredging up "history," because they are fully cognizant that the Abe administration and Japan's conservative politicians are the strongest critics of their current human-rights abuses.

In our public-relations campaign, we should include the following information, which must be reiterated until it penetrates: (1) Japan's government has never tolerated the coercive recruitment of comfort women by government or military authorities, and (2) even the Kono Statement did not admit to official coercion.

The exceedingly vague Kono Statement represents a compromise, a gesture toward South Korea, issued by the Japanese government at a time when it feared a further worsening of Japanese-Korean relations. According to Ishihara Nobuo, former deputy chief Cabinet secretary, Japan was faced with unreasonable demands from South Korea, such as, "We

insist that you acknowledge official coercion.” The Kono Statement was not issued to combat South Korean accusations, but to fend them off.

Therefore, we must issue a new statement without delay. But we must also make it clear that even the Kono Statement does not acknowledge official coercion, as I have discussed, in great detail, earlier in this book.

Here is the portion of the Kono Statement that deals with the recruiting of comfort women.

The recruitment of the comfort women was conducted mainly by private recruiters who acted in response to the request of the military. The Government study has revealed that in many cases they were recruited against their own will, through coaxing coercion, etc., and that, at times, administrative/military personnel directly took part in the recruitments. They lived in misery at comfort stations under a coercive atmosphere.

Here, coercion (in the broad sense) is acknowledged in connection with the behavior of private recruiters and living conditions at comfort stations. Acknowledging coercion in the narrow sense, which the Kono Statement does not do, would be tantamount to admitting that there was systematic coercive recruiting by government or military authorities. Prime Minister Abe’s statement before the Diet, in which he said that “there is no evidence of coercion in the narrow sense,” was correct.

However, it is possible to interpret “administrative/military personnel directly took part in the recruitments,” however inaccurately, as an admission of official coercion (coercion in the narrow sense). Still, there is no acknowledgement of coercion in the narrow sense in the official explanation of the statement provided by the Cabinet Secretariat, the issuing entity.

The League of Young Legislators Concerned about Japan’s Future and History Education compiled a book entitled *Questioning History Textbooks*, which was published in 1997. It mentions the testimony of a Cabinet Councillors’ Office on External Affairs staff member, who explained that the phrase in question refers to a single incident — a war crime committed by military personnel assigned to a Java outpost. The Allies punished the perpetrators, who were either executed or imprisoned, long ago.

In the first place, the fact that a resolution that blatantly contradicts historical fact was submitted to the Congress of the United States, Japan’s ally, is proof that public information issued by the Foreign Ministry for foreign consumption was totally ineffective in countering propaganda emitting from leftists and Japan-haters in Japan, the Chinese Communist Party, North Korea and South Korean leftists.

Conservative forces in Japan must make an effort to open substantive discussions that delve into historical perceptions with conservative American intellectuals and politicians. It would also be a good idea to form a network of conservatives in the U.S. and other key nations. Additionally, there is an urgent need for private, conservative think tanks similar to the Heritage Foundation in the U.S., which could be used to state our case.

### **What did Abe’s April 2007 visit to U.S. accomplish?**

Prime Minister Abe visited the U.S. on April 26 and 27 of this year, amid a barrage of attacks launched by the American media over the comfort women controversy. He deserves a great deal of credit for having shed light on some of the misinterpretations of that issue during his



visit. Abe didn't try to avoid the comfort women issue; he said exactly what he should have said as prime minister. The achievement of his objective — the strengthening of the Japan-U.S. alliance — is in sight.

Upon his arrival in Washington, the prime minister visited Congress, where he conferred with 11 congresspersons in leadership positions from both parties. Among them were Nancy Pelosi, speaker of the House of Representatives; Harry Reid, Senate majority leader; and Mitch McConnell, Senate minority leader. The prime minister also met with Rep. Tom Lantos, chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and cosponsor of the Honda resolution; Japanese-American Daniel Inouye (Democrat), and John Boehner (Republican), House minority leader. (Since the vice-president of the U.S. acts serves concurrently as president of the Senate, the top-ranking senators are the majority and minority leaders.) Speaker Pelosi was moved to comment, "It is very rare that the Democratic and Republican leadership of the House and Senate gather together to meet with a prime minister of another country. This evidences the respect of these congressional leaders present for Prime Minister Abe and our strong desire to further strengthen Japan-U.S. relations."<sup>83</sup> According to press reports, Abe spoke about the comfort women problem as follows: "Neither my wishes nor my statements have been communicated accurately. As an individual and as prime minister, I empathize from the bottom of my heart with the comfort women who suffered so greatly. I am saddened that they were placed in such painful circumstances. (...) There were a great many abuses of human rights in the 20th century, and I cannot say that Japan was completely unconnected with them. However, Japan, as a nation, is committed to investing all its energy in making the 21st century a better era, one in which there are no more abuses of human rights."

In his conversations with President Bush as well, the prime minister mentioned the comfort women issue: "The comfort women endured extreme hardships under very difficult circumstances. My heart goes out to them. It is a terrible shame that they suffered so greatly. The 20th century was an age in which human rights were violated in every region of the world. The entire nation of Japan is committed to eradicating human rights abuses in the 21st century."

These two statements were virtually identical, and were prepared in advance. I was surprised that a visit to Congress was the first item on the prime minister's agenda, and that he voluntarily broached the subject of comfort women there. It is obvious that he was determined to face the issue squarely.

I looked at media reports of Abe's statements, and combining two of them for the sake of convenience, compiled a list of the points he made.

- (1) Neither my intentions nor my statements have been communicated accurately.
- (2) Comfort women endured extreme hardship under very difficult circumstances; they suffered greatly.
- (3) As a human being and as prime minister, I empathize with the comfort women from the depths of my heart.
- (4) It is a terrible shame that comfort women found themselves in such painful circumstances.

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<sup>83</sup> *The Japan Times*, 16 May 2007.

- (5) There were many violations of human rights in the 20th century; Japan was not totally unconnected with them.
- (6) As a nation, Japan will do all possible to help eradicate human rights abuses in the 21st century.

I believe that a great deal of thought went into those words. The first two points are entirely reasonable. In (1), the prime minister articulates his objection to criticism emanating from the U.S. media. In (2), he acknowledges coercion in the broad sense (which the Japanese government acknowledged in the Kono Statement), meaning that he recognizes that the comfort women suffered hardships and privation. In (3), Abe expresses empathy toward former comfort women.

I am not so happy with (4). The prime minister has already stated that he would not apologize even if the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Honda resolution. What he says in (4) could be construed as an apology, and therefore inconsistent with his previous statement. This is a borderline case, because he is expressing sadness at the unfortunate circumstances of comfort women, and only that. In those days, some women had no choice but to serve as comfort women due to poverty. Even then, Japan's policymakers couldn't have thought that was a good thing. Therefore, it was empathy, not guilt, that prompted the prime minister's expression of sorrow. This was a subjective human emotion. It is entirely possible to interpret his words in this way, rather than as an admission of guilt over an evil deed or crime.

The sentiments expressed in (5) and (6) are also well thought out, and can be construed as assertiveness on the part of Japan. In (5), the prime minister states that there were a great many abuses of human rights in the 20th century. The subtext is that these abuses occurred in the U.S., as well as in many other of the world's nations, and that Japan was not without guilt in this area, which could include the comfort women issue as one of many abuses. Abe was voluntarily acknowledging some complicity on the part of 20th-century Japan — complicity shared by virtually every other nation.

In the latter half of the 20th century, Japan succeeded in banishing the poverty that had engendered violations of the rights of comfort women, among others. In (6), the prime minister is expressing the hope that human rights abuses that continue even today in totalitarian North Korea and China will be eradicated, and declaring Japan's firm commitment to the achievement of that objective.

Did Abe's words convey the same concepts to President Bush that they did to me? How much factual information about comfort women did the prime minister communicate at the summit? Only those present can answer these questions.

At a press conference, Bush said the following about comfort women:

The comfort women issue is a regrettable chapter in the history of the world, and I accept the Prime Minister's apology. I thought it was very — I thought his statements — Kono's statement, as well as statements here in the United States were very straightforward and from his heart. And I'm looking forward to working with this man to lead our nations forward. And that's what we spent time discussing today.

We had a personal visit on the issue. He gave his — he told me what was on his heart about the issue, and I appreciated his candor. And our jobs are to, obviously, learn lessons from the

past. All of us need to learn lessons from the past and lead our nations forward. That's what the Prime Minister is doing in a very capable way.<sup>84</sup>

"The comfort women issue is a regrettable chapter in the history of the world" is an expression of recognition identical to (2) and (3) of the points made by Prime Minister Abe in his statements. "I accept the prime minister's apology" is Bush's response to (4). However, since (4) is not an apology to Bush or to the U.S., it is difficult to understand why the U.S. President used the word "accept."

But since the word "appreciate" was spoken, I believe I understand the intent behind what follows. By accepting Abe's apology, Bush meant that he now understood Abe's feelings about the matter and had decided that American criticism of the prime minister should cease. Bush was grateful for Abe's candid statements about the comfort women issue.

When Bush talks about learning lessons from the past, he is referring to Abe's remark about the 20th century. His mention of leading nations forward is a response to Abe's hopes for the 21st century.

Thus, Bush's comments can be interpreted as a show of support for Prime Minister Abe, once he had heard the latter's explanation of the comfort women issue.

At Abe's meeting with key congresspersons, Sen. Daniel Inouye (Democrat) said that he was disheartened by movements in the U.S. relating to the comfort women controversy, despite the fact that seven Japanese prime ministers had already issued apologies. He voiced his fear that such movements would continue. There were no comments about the comfort women issue from the other legislators.

Also noteworthy are remarks made by Rep. Tom Lantos, chairman of the House Committee on International Relations, which was then deliberating the comfort women resolution. Lantos said he would strongly support Abe in his effort to amend Japan's Constitution, a necessary step toward Japan's shouldering security responsibilities befitting its superpower status.

Journalist Komori Yoshihisa of *Sankei Shimbun* has been following trends in Japan-U.S. relations for more than 20 years. About the new American attitude toward the Japanese Constitution, he wrote, "History certainly does change, doesn't it!" But the fact that Rep. Lantos, a liberal Democrat, declared that he would not oppose the revision of our Constitution is proof that Americans trust the Japanese more than ever, because the two nations share the same values.

Judging from the gist of the comfort women resolution, and the volleys of criticism fired at Prime Minister Abe, one would think the Americans would object to Abe's overseeing a constitutional revision, since they view him as a revisionist who glorifies Japan's past acts of aggression. That Rep. Lantos said what he did implies that Abe succeeded in conveying his true intentions to the American legislators. I believe that he deserves praise for his statements about the comfort women issue in Washington.

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<sup>84</sup> Press conference at Camp David on 27 April 2007.

Also noteworthy is the visit of Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Shimomura Hakubun (who accompanied the prime minister to the U.S.) to the North Korea Genocide Exhibit in Washington, D.C. on the afternoon of April 26. The exhibit is an annual event sponsored by the North Korea Freedom Coalition (chaired by Suzanne Scholte), an organization that attempts to combat human rights abuses in North Korea. Representatives of AVKN and NARKN attend each year.

The exhibit included photographs of Japanese abductees and related reference material, as well as photographs taken at the border separating China and North Korea. Other photographs, taken inside North Korea, show the tragic fate of women and children who attempted to escape from North Korea. Also on exhibit were personal possessions of North Koreans, which testify to the low standard of living in that nation; letters from North Koreans expressing their longing for freedom, and films. Prof. Shimada Yoichi, who was present on April 26, provided the following report.

When Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary arrived at the venue in the heart of Washington, D.C., he received a warm welcome. On hand to greet him were Saito Fumiyo (sister of abductee Matsuki Kaoru), Shimada Yoichi (vice-chairman of the NARKN), Korean-American activist Sin U Nam (vice president of the North Korea Freedom Coalition), defectors from North Korea, and volunteers from the staffs of congresspersons.

Sin U Nam served as Shimomura's guide, carefully describing the items on exhibit. The all eyes were focused on a 10-minute film of a public execution in North Korea. In front of an exhibit featuring Japanese abductees, Asano Izumi, president of the Washington Abduction Network and Mrs. Asano described their activities in the U.S.

Sin U Nam and Suzanne Scholte were both impressed by the Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary's visit. Nam found it meaningful that a high-ranking Japanese government official showed a genuine interest in human rights, over which nothing should take precedence. In contrast, the Bush administration vacillates, held prisoner by a vague nuclear agreement.

Here are some of their comments: "No matter how many times we appeal to South Korean government officials for help, they don't even bother to respond. I sense a new anger welling up in me toward the South Korean government. Japan shouldn't bother with the likes of Roh Moo-hyun."

"How dare these people who close their eyes to women who are forced to become sex slaves near the border between China and North Korea, and then self-righteously bring up past problems like the comfort women!"

If you succeed in convincing Americans, they will take your side. But since the Japanese government hasn't attempted to do that to date, proponents of the sex slave argument have had a field day spreading lies. Consequently, those whom we would expect to be on our side are turning against us. But nothing has been written in stone. We can salvage the situation. But only by forging partnerships between the public and private sectors will we succeed in dispelling the misunderstandings about comfort women, which have spread throughout the world.

Earlier, I wrote that Prime Minister Abe's visit to the U.S. was fruitful, but his success was only as permanent as lobbying can be. The next assignment for the Abe administration is to issue a government opinion stating clearly that there was no coercion in the narrow sense.

Such an opinion should be translated into the languages of the world and posted on government websites, where it can communicate its message silently but steadily.

### **Truth must prevail**

When I was collecting reference material to use for this book, I came across the transcript of a fascinating lecture. It was delivered in Fukuoka in July 2002 by the aforementioned Yoshimi Yoshiaki under the title “Results of Research on the Military ‘Comfort Women’ Issue: An Attempt to Shatter the Argument that the Comfort Women System Was Lawful.”<sup>85</sup> In it, Yoshimi compares the comfort women system with lawful, licensed prostitution, and arrives at the following four possible positions that can be taken on this issue.

A. The two systems are identical: “Both involved commercial transactions; both were lawful and permissible.” → Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform

B. The two systems are completely different: “The comfort women system is unacceptable.” → Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (one of the first activist groups established in South Korea)

C. Neither system is permissible, but the comfort women system was more insidious than licensed prostitution. → Yoshimi Yoshiaki

D. The two systems are similar; neither is permissible. → women specialists in feminist history

When Yoshimi criticized A, specialists in feminist history castigated him when he criticized A, saying that the comfort women system was different from licensed prostitution, on the grounds that he was glorifying the latter. According to them, “the woman who becomes a prostitute may do so of her own free will, but there is always an element of coercion in prostitution. Both comfort women and prostitutes are sex slaves.”

At this point, it would seem that Yoshimi is definitely close to embracing A. All those taking this position are saying that both systems were permissible at the time, but they empathize with the women involved for the suffering they endured. No one is saying that either system would be permissible today. I believe I have demonstrated that Prime Minister Abe was saying the same thing in Washington.

Then, if neither the comfort women system nor licensed prostitution is permissible, why did those systems exist in Japan’s past and in the past of most of the world’s nations? Why didn’t Yoshimi ask this question?

As described in detail in the first part of this book, in 1992, when the comfort women issue surfaced due to the activities of *Asahi Shimbun*, Yoshimi and others, Prime Minister Miyazawa apologized to President Roh Tae-woo on eight occasions.

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<sup>85</sup> Taniguchi Kazunori, ed., “Tokushu: ianfu mondai no genzai” (Special: current status of the comfort women controversy” in *Senso to sei: Dai 25 go* (War and sex: No. 25), 30 March 2006.

At that time, I asked a bureaucrat at the Foreign Ministry what the prime minister was apologizing for. Did he apologize for the official coercion of comfort women? Did he apologize to the victims because they were so poor they were sold into prostitution? If so, then why doesn't he apologize to the licensed Japanese prostitutes who worked in Yoshiwara?

The bureaucrat replied that he would conduct an investigation. Fifteen years have passed since then, and no one makes accusations of official coercion anymore. Yoshimi and company have begun to view the comfort women system and licensed prostitution in the same way. We knew that 15 years ago. I wonder if he's even aware how much damage he and his ilk have done to Japan's honor.

Who else do we have to blame? The professional liar who insisted he had taken part in the abduction of women (slave hunts), which never took place, and went to South Korea to apologize. Then there was the newspaper reporter who found it just as easy to lie as to tell the truth, and who described an old woman who told him she had been sold into prostitution as someone tricked into becoming a comfort woman on the pretext that she would be joining a women's volunteer corps, and the irresponsible newspaper that employed him, which did not retract his story even after the lies were exposed. The arrogant, shameless lawyer who sued Japan for the recovery of ¥26,000 (a huge amount in those days) in savings on behalf of a former prostitute. A masochistic NGO activist whose visits to the UN, where he lodged the fanciful (and fraudulent) claim that comfort women were sex slaves, culminated in a UNHCR report. Every single one of these people is Japanese.

The controversy began with lies. The lies ballooned into fallacies, and ended with a resolution condemning Japan on the point of being passed by the U.S. House of Representatives. All along, the propelling force was Japan-hating Japanese.

They formed a mammoth global network, steadily accumulated documentary material, and launched a perverted interpretation of international law. These misguided souls continue to attack our beautiful fatherland, *their* fatherland! Their obsessive anti-Japanese emotions are contrary to everything we stand for.

We must expose the lies they have been spreading during the past 15 years. That is the only way we can defeat them. And we shall prevail, because truth is on our side.

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