



On August 15, the end-of-war day, VAWW-NET Japan (Violence Against Women in War-Network) conducted a survey on former Japanese soldiers who came to prey at the Yasukuni Shrine. Twenty-six volunteers interviewed the former soldiers regarding their experiences and views on "comfort women." Although the volunteers were at first feared whether the former soldiers would respond to them, most of them were willing to be interviewed.

Fifty-three former soldiers participated in the survey, eleven of which did not actually go to the battlefield. The rest told us about their experiences with and views on "comfort women" or "comfort stations." We believe that their accounts reflect general Japanese people's perceptions of "comfort women" issues.

The questionnaire used for the interview included the following:

- (1) Did you go to the war?
- (2) Were there any "comfort stations"?
- (3) Do you think the "comfort stations" were necessary?
- (4) What was your impression about the "comfort stations" or "comfort women"?
- (5) Do you think Japanese government should apologize and make reparation for the "comfort women"?
- (6) Did you ever go to the "comfort stations"?
- (7) How old were you at that time?

The following is part of the responses.

- **Do you think the "comfort stations" were necessary?**
Yes: 35 No: 3 No response: 15
- **Why do you think they were necessary?**
Soldiers needed to release their stress.
They helped prevent venereal diseases. It

was a necessary evil. The military discipline is maintained. They prevented young soldiers from rape local women because of the unfulfilled sexual desire. They were needed to meet soldiers' sexual desire.

- **What was your impression of "comfort stations" or "comfort women"? Do you have any memories about them?**

Some women ("comfort women") were beautiful, and others were not. North Korean recruiters were collecting women. I made a good friend with a "comfort woman." A friend of mine, a Japanese woman was working at a restaurant when she saw a want ad for a military facility. After she got that job and was sent to Singapore, she found she was a "comfort woman." When Japanese military withdrew, the "comfort women" were referred to as "assistant nurses." The "comfort stations" were operated by civilians on military order. South Korean brokers recruited women in poverty. There was no force. The "comfort women" were considered to belong to the military. The military provided food, clothes, and lodging. New soldiers were not allowed to visit the "comfort stations" although they wanted to do so. On the "truck island," there were incidents of double suicide of "comfort women" and soldiers.

- **Do you think Japanese government should apologize and make reparation for the "comfort women"?**

Yes: 6

As the "comfort women" sold their bodies at such a young age for their country, the government should make appropriate

compensation to them. Compensation should be made for those who brought to the "comfort stations" forcibly. Compensation should be made for all "comfort women" because they were brought forcibly. Some form of compensation should have been made earlier.

No: 35

They were paid money. We already have formed the Asian Women's Fund. The "comfort women" were doing business activities. Soviet military raped and murdered Japanese women in much more brutal manners. It has been over. It is not the Japanese government but former military leaders who should be held accountable for the problem. Young men aged 19 to 23 also suffered. It is a matter between two countries. The Japanese government has already made compensation to Korean government. Apology has already been made. "Comfort women" prostituted themselves because they were poor. The "comfort stations" were owned by civilians but not by the military. The "comfort women" were friends of Japanese soldiers. The "comfort women" devoted their bodies to their country. It is too late to argue against "comfort stations." The "comfort stations" was nothing more than business. Their parents must have been paid decently for their daughters' work as "comfort women." If the parents had not been paid decently, the daughters would have announced themselves as "comfort women." This "comfort women" movement has been agitated chiefly by Japanese lawyers and other activists.

These opinions are only a small part of the whole response. Some of the responses were

extremely similar to the idea of "jiyu-shugishikan." We think it is a serious problem that many people make their conclusions without a close examination of facts regarding "comfort women" and "comfort stations." We were shocked to learn that there was such a big gap between the former soldiers' perceptions and testimonies of victimized women. In this regard, we strongly feel that the "Tribunal" will help fill the gap by clarifying the crime nature and accountability of sexual slavery by Japanese military. (Rumiko Nishino)