

LIBERATION OF THE KOREAN MINORITY
IN JAPAN

" Comfort Women " Issue

Presented to

the Division of Human Rights of the United Nations

February 25, 1992

by

Association Fighting for the Acquisition
of
the Human Rights of Koreans in Japan

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His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali
Secretary General of the United Nations
New York, New York 10017
U.S.A.

February 25, 1992.

Dear Mr. Secretary General:

For the purpose of securing human rights for the Koreans living in Japan, we have previously submitted to Secretary General two documents, Volume A and Volume B, dated October 24, 1979, and the third, Volume C, dated March 12, 1980. In August 1980, our petition was adopted by the Working Group of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights and it was debated by the Sub-commission on Human Rights. On March 2, 1981, a representative of Japan was called before a closed meeting of the full Commission, where the matter was discussed for an hour.

Ten years later, on June 23, 1990 and on February 20, 1991 respectively, we have also submitted to Commission on Human Rights the documents entitled Liberation of the Korean Minority in Japan in which the issues of Fingerprint, Franchise, the Right of Residence, and the Right of acquiring citizenship were raised. We believe that this document was adopted by the Working Group of Commission on Human Rights and discussed at the Sub-commission as well.

This time, we, together with the Korean Council for the Women drafted for Military Sexual Service by Japan, are raising the issue of Military Comfort Women (Ju Gun I An Fu) by which 200,000 Korean women were drafted and forced to serve the Japanese soldiers as sexual slaves by Japanese military and governmental authorities from 1937 to 1945.

I have the honour to request your sympathetic concern and support for this issue so that those victims could be appropriately compensated and the human rights of women never be violated.

Your attention is highly appreciated and may God's all blessings be upon you and your responsibilities.

Sincerely yours,

최 창 화
Rev. CHOI Chang Hwa,
President

최창화
Choi, Changhwa

KOREAN COMFORT WOMEN (JU GUN I AN FU)

by Rev. CHOI Chang Hwa

In 1592, 400 years ago, when she has invaded Korea under the leadership of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Japanese military corps have killed hundreds of thousands of Korean people and drafted 50,000 people by force, and sold them as slaves to India, Philippines and Macao with cheap price.

In 1923 when Tokyo gross earthquake disaster took place, about 6,000 Korean people were killed by Japanese simply because they were Koreans. Japanese authorities, however, have never made apology and never attempted to make compensation for this victims.

From 1937 to 1945, about 1,500,000 Koreans were drafted by Japan and forced to work in the mines, for erecting airports and military establishments. Particularly, 200,000 Korean women from 12 years old were drafted in the name of "Women's Voluntary Labour Corps" and forced to do sexual services days and nights for Japanese soldiers as Comfort Women in the Japanese military areas in South East Asia, China as well as in Japan.

On February 13, 1988, in Kitakyushu, Fukuoka, I met with two representatives including Mrs. Yun Chung Ok of Korea Church Women United and we discussed the possibilities of collecting witnesses as well as documents related to the issue of Comfort Women and agreed to investigate it.

WITNESSES OF COMFORT WOMEN

1) Case of Mme BAE Bong Ki, the first witness in Japan

This issue began to be revealed by the testimony of Mme. BAE Bong Ki, the first witness. She was drafted in 1944 and put in the island called Tokashiki in Okinawa and forced to do sexual services for several tens of soldiers a day. She has survived miraculously during the Okinawa war. There were more than 1,000 Korean Comfort Women in Okinawa at that time. The full story of Mme BAE Bong Ki was made a movie in the name of "Old Woman of Okinawa" directed by Mr. Yamaya Detsuo through which the issue was publicized for the first time. There were also a book entitled " A House of Red Tile " which described the tragic life of Mme. BAE. A part of her witness is contained in the film called " A Song of Arirang " directed by Mr. PARK Soo Nam. The book " Corps of Emperor and Korean Comfort Women" written by Mr. KIM Il Myun also contributed to publicize the issue in the Japanese society. She has lived in Nahashi, Okinawa and ended her life on October 16, 1991 at the age of seventy-seven.

On January 9, 1992, I heard the story of M^{me} BAE from the husband of Mrs. KIM Hyun Ok who had had a good friendship with M^{me}. BAE for long time. I also visited the temple Toshin of Tomikusuku where her remains of the dead are laid.

On October 27, 1990 a memorial service for Comfort Women took place in the island Tokishiki. In the service Mrs. KIM Jung Nyo, the secretary of Association of Fighting for the Acquisition of the Human Rights of Koreans in Japan and at the same time president of Association of Women of Korean Churches in Japan also participated.

2) M^{me}. KIM Hak Soon, the first witness in Korea

M^{me} KIM Hak Soon who was 67 years old in 1991 and living in Seoul said that she was a Comfort Woman and appealed that her pent up resentment should be revenged before she die. She was drafted in 1940 at the age of 16 and sent to the middle part of China and forced to do sexual services for four or five soldiers a day. She escaped in three months.

Since this kind of career is shameful in Korean context, nobody has dared to confess that she has been a Comfort Woman. Japanese government has always denied their responsibilities. " Since Japanese government is denying the fact, I dare appear as a living witness." said M^{me} KIM Hak Soon. Her husband and two children died years ago and she lives in a very poor condition.

CONCLUSION

Recently more and more witnesses are appearing. This issue needs to be clarified as a historical reality for a historical lesson so that next generation do not take the same mistake. The past shouldn't be forgotten but remembered exactly for the true peace and reconciliation between the two countries.

The consciousness of human rights has been stired up through the struggles for human rights of Koreans living in Japan in 1970s and refusal of fingerprint in 1980s. The human right struggle also encouraged Koreans in Japan to establish their self-soverignty.

The purpose of raising the issue of Comfort Women is to charge inhumane crime of sexual slavery and to restore the human dignity of those Korean Women who had been victimized. This will also be a way to secure the human rights of Korean ethnic people living in Japan.



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UNITED NATIONS
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Forty-eighth session
Agenda item 11

PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Statement of International Educational Development,
a non-governmental organization on the Roster
(Secretary-General's list)

HUMAN RIGHTS AND ARMED GROUPS —THE SUDANESE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION
ARMY AND UGANDAN HOSTAGES

In its resolution 1991/29 the Commission requested all rapporteurs and working groups to pay attention to acts committed by armed groups adversely affecting human rights, and asked the Secretary-General to collect relevant information on this topic.

International Educational Development brings to the attention of the Commission the situation of hostages being held by the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (the SPLM) and its Army (the SPLA). A number of soldiers from the Ugandan Army had fled Uganda seeking refuge in Sudan. Unfortunately, the SPLA abducted them and has either forcibly conscripted them or holds them in detention.

One of these prisoner/hostages is Lt. Solomon Onyango Mariki, whose brother, a refugee in Norway, reports that in 1988, SPLM leader John Garang gave captured Ugandans the choice of joining his army or fending for themselves. Those who chose to fend for themselves, including Lt. Onyango Mariki, were recaptured, tried in "tribunals" and imprisoned. Since that time, they have been subjected to extremely harsh treatment and remain hostages.

This situation is not unique. IED proposes that in

addition to attention being made to these situations by rapporteurs and working groups, the Commission should prepare an annual list of persons known to be hostages, including the state or entity suspected of holding them. The holding powers should also be asked to respond to inquiries by the Commission. Governments with contacts with suspected holding powers should be asked to carry out inquiries and report on the outcomes of them. Particular situations, such as that now involving the SPLA, should be addressed by resolution.

LONG-AGO VIOLATIONS -- JAPAN

Certain other situations defy easy solution, especially gross violations that have occurred some time ago. Nonetheless, the victims of old violations continue to seek remedies. In order to be consistent, all violations, including old ones, require a remedy for victims

An example of the kind of gross violation occurring years ago that still cry out for redress is the situation of Korean girls and women abducted by Japanese forces during World War II as sex slaves, under a system known as jugun ianfu. These victims have received no remedy for a variety of reasons, including -- (1) lack of access to domestic legal systems; (2) failure of domestic legal systems to take cases of this nature, in spite of the international character of human rights law; (3) political pressures among states involved.

Because of the gravity of this type of offense, identified as a war crime under international humanitarian law and as a crime against humanity if occurring in peace time, IED believes there should be some international forum where cases could be brought and where the parties could seek mediation and settlement.

Our attorney Etsuro Totsuka and Japanese Diet member Shoji Motooka have been investigating the situation of sexual enslavement of Korean girls and women and the enslavement of other Koreans by the Japanese Imperial Army. In response to them, the Japanese government did not deny allegations made in the Diet's Budgetary Committee of the enslavement of 1.5 million Koreans, many of them as sex slaves. The late Mr. Seijyuro Arafune, former Vice-Chair of the Japanese House of Representatives alleged that 57.9% of those compulsorily enslaved died in enslavement, including 143,000 young Korean girls and women. These acts should not be either forgotten nor should survivor's needs for remedy be ignored.

In January, 1992, the government of Japan offered an apology and statement of remorse to the Korean people through the governments of North and South Korea. However, the Japanese government offered nothing for the victims in terms of compensation or other "effective remedy" as required by Article 8 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Japanese claims (1) that the situation was resolved by an 1985 agreement between South Korea and Japan; (2) that the burden of proof is not on their side; and (3) that it will sit by until a Tokyo District Court issues a judgment are not convincing as a defense for the government's inaction on this issue.

IED is convinced that the international community can usefully participate in solutions to long-ago violations such as this one. In particular, the Commission on Human Rights could set up a mediation panel whose mandate would include providing suggested remedies, including compensation, for victims. One model is the Commission on Truth set up in El Salvador under the auspices of the United Nations and composed of three highly regarded international figures. The UN Commission could also request the Sub-Commission's Rapporteur on Compensation to study this type of situation and to make recommendations regarding remedies.

The Statement by IED (February 17, 1992)

The Statement by the representative of the Japanese Government, Mr. Sezaki Katsumi , February 19, 1992

1. The Japanese government acknowledged the involvement of the Japanese Imperial Army with Ju Gun I An Fu (Comfort Women)
2. The Japanese Prime Minister Mr. Miyazawa apologized and expressed his remorse to Korean people.
3. As for compensation, a judicial inquiry is under way for individual cases. Therefore the Japanese government is not in the position to comment on it.
4. It will devote itself to further investigation.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND VIOLATIONS OF RIGHTS OF KOREAN PEOPLE BY JAPAN

In 1910, Japan annexed Korea using military force to obtain from that country a treaty of cessation. Korea remained a colony of Japan until August 1945, when Japan surrendered to the allied forces.

During the period of occupation, Korean people were forced into subjugation of the Emperor of Japan and deprived of many human rights, including the right to language.

During World War II, there was large-scale trafficking in Koreans, and an estimated 1.5 million Koreans were enslaved and sent to Japan where they served the Japanese military effort. An estimated 58% died in Japanese hands.

According to Korean witnesses, Japanese forces surrounded Korean villages, most of the inhabitants were captured and then sent to Japan where they were forced into heavy labour, living in barracks called tako-beya under Japanese guard with little chance of escape. Torture was a daily practice, and malnutrition and other mistreatment was a major factor in the hundreds of thousands of deaths.

The worst situation fell to women and girls, under a sex-slave system called Jugun Ianfu--literally "women who go to the front to comfort soldiers". Most of the Korean girls and women were not professional prostitutes, but were forced into sexual servitude. At the time of surrender, an estimated 80,000 jugun ianfu were found in brothels in the Japanese-occupied territories -- most of them Korean.

The brothels were under the control of the Japanese Imperial Forces, and frequently on the military front lines. The late Mr. Seijyuro, former Vice-Chairman of the House of Representatives in the Diet of Japan, alleged that 143,000 Korean jugun ianfu died in Japanese captivity.

Saturday, December 7, 1991

Published In Tokyo And Osaka

Mainichi Daily News

WWII Korean 'comfort girls' seek compensation

Calling for justice 50 years after the start of the Pacific War, three Korean women forced to become prostitutes for Japanese soldiers and other Korean conscripts who never received pay filed suit against the Japanese government Friday for 700 million yen in compensation.

It was the first time former "comfort girls" publicly demanded redress for their suffering from the Japanese government.

In parliamentary debate, government officials have shunned responsibility for the estimated 100,000 to 200,000 women forced to engage in sex with Japanese soldiers, maintaining they were under private management.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Koichi Kato commented Friday that the government faces difficulties because its searches have failed to

turn up evidence that the government was involved.

The suit, filed at the Tokyo District Court by 35 former Korean conscripts, workers, and their bereaved family members, is the latest effort by Japan's former colonial subjects to win government recognition for wartime abuses.

The plaintiffs are each demanding 20 million yen.

Kim Hak-sun, 69, who at age 17 was told a "good job" was waiting for her and was subsequently shipped to an army brothel in China, said she was "lucky" to be in Japan to press her case because thousands of women like her perished in foreign lands.

"Why does the Japanese government lie and say it is not involved? I can't allow it," she said in a tearful and angry state-

ment at a news conference.

"If possible I want my youth returned," she said.

Other plaintiffs made emotional pleas for compensation for injuries suffered during the war, and loss of life of their loved ones.

"Fifty years after the war the government has done nothing to compensate us," said Lee Yong-han, 79, who lost his right forearm when a Japanese ship he was on was blown up in seas near Taiwan.

"The government has ignored our plight, which can only mean it holds us in contempt," he said.

While the Japanese government has paid compensation to Japanese veterans, it says it has no obligation to former conscripts who are no longer Japanese citizens.

The Japanese government also maintains that it has paid war in-

demnities at the government level and has no obligation to meet individual claims.

Emphasizing that the government regards compensation a closed case, Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe told a Diet committee Thursday that payments to individuals would create a substantial tax burden, creating unmanageable financial problems for the government.

Gov't softens stance on 'comfort girls'

'Comfort girls' story to unfold in court

By Jocelyn Ford
Kyodo News Service

It was 1942. Lee Jin-hee, then 15, was on her way home from the southern Korean port city of Pusan where she had gone to gawk at the city's first escalator when she was intercepted by three men.

They enticed her with promises of a lucrative job in a Japanese military apparel factory. Before she knew what was happening, two of the men hustled her to the port and shoved her aboard a ship.

Her final destination: a remote military camp on New Britain Island, Papua New Guinea, where she spent the next three years in a church transformed into a

brothel.

Her captors told her to watch a woman performing sex, and ordered Lee (not her real name) to do likewise. When she refused, she was beaten.

Until the end of World War II, trucks would rumble up to the church daily, disgorging soldiers into lines to wait their turn.

For Lee, the days were spent accommodating 10 to 15 soldiers, with occasional breaks to flee to bomb shelters.

From 1937 to 1945 as many as 200,000 young women, mainly from Korea, were delivered to military outposts around Asia where they were forced to provide sexual services for Japanese soldiers, historians say.

Fifty years later their traumatic story is being told by three survivors, who, in a race against time, are demanding the Japanese government at last be held accountable for their suffering and pay compensation.

Lee, 64, Kim Hak-sun, 69, and a third plaintiff, who also requested anonymity, filed suit Friday against the Japanese government, each seeking 20 million yen.

According to the few known existing documents and testimony by former military doctors, the practice of dispatching "comfort girls" to military outposts was streamlined after soldiers went on a rampage in the 1937 Nanjing

massacre, raping and murdering Chinese civilians by the thousands.

Military officials calculated that soldiers would be more orderly if they could engage in sex, but they were concerned about the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, according to documents presented by the plaintiffs to the Tokyo District Court.

The solution was young women from Korea, then a Japanese colony, where deeply entrenched Confucian values virtually assured they would have no previous sexual experience, the women say.

Described at the time as "gifts to the Imperial Army," the women were confined to military barracks, where, according to regulations spelled out by the army's education branch, they were expected to provide services from noon to midnight, the women say.

Pained by Tokyo's denial that neither the government nor the military participated in forced prostitution, Kim said she decided to file suit to prevent her experience from being forgotten.

The Japanese government repeated Friday that it has not yet found documents proving official government involvement. In earlier statements the government has asserted the brothels were the work of private companies.

Japan, softening its claim that the government bears no responsibility for World War II "comfort girls," said Wednesday it is prepared to take into consideration the sufferings of an unknown number of Korean women forced to engage in sex with Japanese soldiers.

"We must take into consideration the suffering and scars that were inflicted under past circumstances, and not respond to this legally on the basis of a treaty," Chief Cabinet Secretary Koichi Kato told a regularly scheduled news conference.

Kato's remarks followed an official request by the South Korean government Tuesday to provide a list of the Korean women who were dispatched to brothels on the front lines.

Some 100,000 to 200,000 women, mostly from Korea then under Japanese rule, were allegedly forced to become "comfort girls" to Japanese soldiers.

Japanese officials earlier maintained that the women were under private management and that war reparations had already been addressed by a treaty with the South Korean government.

Kato said the government also plans to intensify its investigation in the wake of heightened public interest in the issue and the first public statements by actual victims. The results will be relayed to Seoul, he said.

The chief government spokesman did not say whether the investigation would be concluded in time for Prime Minister Kichi Miyazawa's visit to Seoul, expected in mid-January.

Last week three former comfort women who said they were forced to provide sexual services to Japanese soldiers during the war, along with 32 other South Koreans seeking reparations for wartime abuses, filed suit demanding compensation.

It was the first time for former "comfort girls" to call publicly for Japan to state its involvement and award compensation.

Each plaintiff is seeking 20 million yen.

The government, following a visit here by South Korean President Roh Tae-woo in the spring of 1990, initially said the women would be included in a list of forced laborers that it planned to turn over to Seoul.

December 8, 1991

December 12, 1991.

Documents found linking gov't to 'comfort girls'

Documents found in the Defense Agency library purportedly show the wartime Japanese Imperial Army's role in the forced prostitution of "comfort women" mostly from Korea, sources revealed Saturday.

The existence of the documents would contradict the Japanese government's assertions that the Japanese military played no part in running brothels for Japanese soldiers in China.

A Chuo University professor in Tokyo found the five documents

January 12, 1992

in the library Friday among classified letters exchanged between the Army Ministry and Japanese forces in China and in diaries written by units in China.

An Army Ministry document dated March 4, 1938 ordered forces stationed in China to control the recruitment of the forced prostitutes, and attention paid to keeping the forces' dignity and avoiding social problems in recruiting.

Also a report incorporated in the document, dated April 1939 and drawn up by forces stationed in south China, says that the military police controlled 223 comfort girls in the eastern part of Guangdong.

A document written by a staff officer of the Japanese forces in north China in July 1938 asked for the quick establishment of comfort facilities to offset raping by Japanese soldiers and the ensuing anti-Japanese sentiment.

Yoshiaki Yoshimi, the professor who found the documents, says that a Japanese military doctor in Shanghai reported that 80 percent of the forced prostitutes were Koreans, though the above documents do not mention whether they were Koreans.

"The documents clearly show that the Japanese Army recruited and managed (comfort girls). The Japanese government should survey, apologize and compensate on the matter," said Yoshimi.

Ichiro Yoneyama, director of the Defense Research Institute where the documents were found, said that he cannot comment on whether the defunct Japanese Imperial Army was involved in the case.

Meanwhile, in Hokkaido, a group of researchers on comfort girls found a draft document that supports the Imperial Army's plan to invite Korean and Chinese women as prostitutes to Japan.

The draft, drawn up by the Army Ministry dated March 22, 1940, is on the transportation of Chinese laborers to Japan, and the fifth clause of article 11 of the document is on "the invitation of Chinese, Koreans and prostitutes in light of the sexual desire" of laborers. It was found in a museum in Sapporo on the history of Hokkaido's development.

"Whether the plan was carried out is unclear, but the draft does prove the involvement of the Japanese Army in the dealing of comfort girls," said the researchers.

Some 100,000 to 200,000 women, mostly from Korea then under Japanese rule, were allegedly forced to work as prostitutes during World War II.

Three former comfort girls from South Korea have filed a suit seeking compensation from the Japanese government.

(Compiled from Mainichi and Kyodo reports)

Gov't apologizes to 'comfort girls'; reparations planned

The government's chief spokesman formally apologized Monday for the Imperial Army's involvement in forced recruitment and prostitution of Koreans and other Asian women at military brothels during World War II.

"The Japanese government offers an apology and expresses its remorse," Chief Cabinet Secretary Koichi Kato said in a statement regarding Asian women forced to provide sexual favors to Japanese soldiers during the war.

Kato's statement is the government's first official acknowledgment of the "comfort women" and came three days before Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa is scheduled to leave for Seoul.

Compensation for the women will be handled separately from previous war reparations arrangements due to "emotional injuries" they suffered, Chief Cabinet Secretary Koichi Kato told a regularly scheduled news conference.

The government had repeatedly maintained there was no evidence of government participation in providing some 100,000 to

200,000 "comfort girls" to Japanese soldiers on the front lines, and that the compensation issue was closed with a 1965 war reparations treaty.

"We are still in the midst of the investigation, and at this stage we can't say the extent to which (the army) was involved," Kato said. "But, based on various materials, we cannot deny that the army was involved."

The change comes one month after three former "comfort girls" filed suit against the government here seeking compensation and recognition of its past deeds.

Kato said he wished to wait for the court decision before expanding on how Japan would make compensation.

The issue is expected to come up in meetings between Miyazawa and President Roh Tae Woo during the prime minister's three-day visit.

The apology followed recent revelations that Defense Agency archives contain documents detailing the Japanese military's role in recruiting "comfort women."

Schoolgirls linked to forced labor

SEOUL (Kyodo) — Two influential South Korean dailies Tuesday carried reports that the wartime Japanese government forcefully conscripted Korean sixth-grade primary school girls for labor in Japan.

The Dong-a Ilbo and Joong-ang Ilbo devoted considerable space to the reports which claimed evidence for the allegation that the girls were actually pressed into a "volunteer corps" was contained in a school register recently located in a school in Seoul.

The new revelations are likely to fan anti-Japanese opinion in South Korea where during World War II, the term "volunteer corps" was also used as a euphemism for so-called "comfort

women" forced into serving as prostitutes for the Japanese Imperial Army.

The record cited as evidence for the charge was made in the final stages of the war at Pangsan Primary School, since closed, in central Seoul. It was located by Masaie Ikeda, 69, a former teacher who worked at the school.

Ikeda, who now lives in Ikoma City in Nara Prefecture, was involved in arrangements for conscripting girls at the time, but claims she did not know the real reason for their conscription.

She recently located the documents stored at another school while trying to find out what happened to the girls.

Ikeda said that out of a class of

70 girls, five were sent to Japan in July 1944 and one in February 1945.

She said all were reported at the time to have gone to a factory in Toyama Prefecture run by the construction machinery maker Fujikoshi Works, predecessor to the present-day Nachi Fujikoshi Corp.

The factory made airplanes at the time and the girls reportedly had no choice but to work there.

"The Japanese government is claiming it had nothing to do with the drafting of laborers, but there was a quota given to the school by the education committee," Ikeda said.

"It is clear the government was involved," she said.

Gov't considering relief for victims

The government is considering possible relief measures for former forced laborers in South Korea. Chief Cabinet Secretary Koichi Kato was quoted as saying Tuesday.

However, Kato reiterated the government's long-running stance that the government would not provide individual compensation for their sufferings, the officials said.

Kato disclosed the new government move in a meeting with Sadao Yamahana, secretary-general of No. 1 opposition Social Democratic Party (SDP). Kato was quoted as saying, "If there are any good ideas among the SDP, please contact the government."

The government maintains the stand that the issue of war reparations was settled at the government level in a 1965 treaty between Japan and South Korea.

It is the first time that a senior government official has spoken of possible relief for former forced laborers, a virtual "compensation."

Observers said the government apparently hopes to pave the way for a settlement through political decision, while maintaining the general policy of not compensating individual victims.

Meanwhile, citizens groups called on the government Tuesday to compensate the primarily Korean victims for its admitted role in wartime forced prostitution.

Seven representatives from 13 groups dealing with Japanese-Korean issues made the plea in a meeting with Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Morihiro Kondo at the Prime Minister's Official Residence.

They gave him a statement calling Japan's aggression and 1910-1945 colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula "injustice," saying that as a matter of the Japanese society's honor and trust, the government should formally apologize and pledge compensation.

The groups' statement also called for preserving historical buildings, establishing memorial museums, and giving correct descriptions in textbooks so as not to repeat the "injustice."

Jan 16, 1992

Pacific War veterans call 'Comfort Women' hot line

Dozens of Japanese Imperial Army veterans called a hot line Tuesday to tell of their experiences using the services of "comfort women" prostitutes in World War II, a hot line organizer said.

All but five of the roughly 70 calls logged by "Comfort Women 110," a temporary telephone service organized by civic groups, on its first day came from men, Keiko Yasuhara said.

Nearly 50 were men in their 70s who, as enlisted men in the war, "did not have any (moral) doubts" about having sex with the women, said Yasuhara, a member of a Japanese group supporting South Koreans who filed a suit against the Japanese government last month seeking compensation, charging forced sex and conscription.

One former soldier said he felt no guilt at the time and was angered when a woman repeatedly cursed him in Korean, Yasuhara said.

But now, she quoted the man as saying he feels very painful when he thinks of the woman.

Another said the government should pay pensions to former "comfort women," as it does to

former soldiers, and another cried while recalling his experiences with the forced prostitutes, she said.

But not all were sympathetic, Yasuhara said, citing one man who said he knew many women who were making more money than he. She said sympathetic calls outnumbered unsympathetic ones six to four.

Many of the callers talked about Korean women, but some spoke of Chinese and Japanese women, and one referred to a 10-year-old Chinese girl forced to be a prostitute, she said.

Nine civic groups of Japanese and South Korean residents in Japan set up the hot line to collect information on "comfort women," mostly from Japanese-occupied Korea, who were forced to work in military brothels.

The groups installed the hot line two days before Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa was to start an official visit to South Korea.

The hot line will be open Wednesday and Thursday from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. with three numbers — 03-3263-9437, 9438, 9439, Yasuhara said.

Gov't was not serious on 'comfort girl' papers

—Claims historian who made crucial discovery—

1.19

The historian who found documents incriminating the Imperial Army in forcing Asian women to serve as prostitutes for its troops said the government could have uncovered the material had it made a serious search.

Chuo University Professor Yoshiaki Yoshimi said he was researching a different topic in a Defense Agency library when he

came across documents that attracted his attention.

After two days of investigation, he found the secret 1937 army papers that ended up being the lead story in the Asahi Shinbun on Jan. 11.

The report forced the government to reverse its long-held position and admit that the Imperial Army had been involved in

recruiting the mainly Korean "comfort girls" and forcing them to be prostitutes for Japanese soldiers during World War II.

Previously, the government had maintained that private enterprises arranged prostitutes for the troops.

The government announced last month it would intensify investigation of the issue after three Korean women who said they had been forced into prostitution sued the government for damages.

On Friday in Seoul, Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa expressed an apology over the issue before the South Korean Parliament.

Professor Yoshimi said he thought determined investigators would easily find evidence of Imperial Army involvement in the forced-prostitution operation. Asked why he had been able to find materials that apparently eluded the government, he answered, "They weren't seriously looking."

A Foreign Ministry official denied that the investigation had been lax.

"Many professors and newspapers have been looking for such documents and they didn't find anything. I think (Yoshimi) might have just been lucky," said the official, who by custom spoke on condition of anonymity.

Chief government spokesman Koichi Kato said Monday that the government is searching for material "with heart and soul."

Foreign Ministry officials said last month's announcement of the intensified probe marked the first time that most government agencies, including the Defense Agency, had been instructed to search for materials related to the comfort girls.

Before that, one official said, "we didn't notice that this kind of thing existed."

Yoshimi said any government investigation could not be trusted because most of the relevant archives are secret and authorities might cover up revealing material.

"If (the government) doesn't promise to make public what they've found, it doesn't mean a thing," he said. (AP)

Japan to offer apology to N. Korea on 'comfort women'

Japan will apologize to North Korea over the tens of thousands of Korean women it forced to provide sex for Japanese soldiers during World War II, Foreign Ministry officials said Thursday.

The officials said Japan will make the apology at the sixth round of normalization talks with North Korea planned for late January in Beijing.

The Japanese delegation to the Tokyo-Pyongyang talks will make an apology similar to that expressed by Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa during his visit to South Korea last week, the officials said.

It will also tell Pyongyang that

Japan intends to probe the truth on issues concerning the so-called "comfort women," they said.

On Monday, the (North) Korean Workers Party newspaper Rodong Sinmun urged Japan to "sincerely apologize with a sense of guilt" for the "unheard-of crimes" it committed and to square its account with the past.

Some 100,000 to 200,000 women, mostly from Korea, then under Japanese rule, were conscripted to work in Japanese military brothels before and during World War II.

The exact date of the sixth round of Tokyo-Pyongyang talks has not yet been set.

Jan 19, 1992

Jan 25, 1992

Seoul will seek redress for 'comfort women'

SEOUL (Kyodo) — South Korea will officially demand compensation from Japan for having forced Korean women to provide sexual services to Japanese soldiers during World War II, the South Korean news agency Yonhap reported Tuesday.

The government made the decision in a meeting to discuss countermeasures on issues concerning the so-called "comfort-women," the report said.

Officials attending the meeting said circumstances were seen to be different from the time when South Korea signed a treaty with Japan in 1965, in which it renounced claims for war reparations, the report said.

They noted that Japanese authorities were involved in the recruitment and management of the "comfort women" while the fact that elementary school students were forcibly mobi-

lized for service as *Trautmai*, or volunteer corps, was verified recently.

Yonhap also said the Ministry of Justice reported that Seoul has the right to officially demand compensation and reparations from Tokyo on this matter, on the basis of international laws and relations.

Seoul will also set up a working level group participated in by several ministries to probe the truth of the Teishintai, the report said.

The group will hold its first meeting on Friday and plans to discuss establishing a system to receive reports from the victims, it said.

Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa, during an official visit to South Korea last week, apologized for the forcible recruitment of the "comfort women" and said the government would thoroughly investigate the matter.

Some 100,000 to 200,000 women were forced to become "comfort women" for Japanese soldiers. The majority of the women came from Korea, which was then under Japanese colonial rule.

Tokyo has acknowledged the Imperial Army's involvement in the recruitment and management of the "comfort women" but has refused to pay compensation.

Japan's official position is that war reparations have already been settled under the 1965 treaty with the South Korean government.

On Monday, Miyazawa left open the possibility that Japan might pay compensation to the former "comfort women."

He said Seoul has never asked clearly for compensation because of the 1965 treaty but that he could not call the problem settled.

Jan 22, 1992

Gov't may investigate other Asian 'comfort women'

The gov't may expand its investigation of forced prostitution in World War II to include Chinese and other Asian women,

as well as Koreans, the top government spokesman said Friday.

The government cannot ignore historic documents showing that Chinese, Filipinas and other nationals were among the women who were dispatched to provide sexual services to Imperial Army soldiers, Chief Cabinet Secretary Koichi Kato said at a regularly scheduled news conference.

"Our handling is no different," for other Asian countries, Kato said, but the government plans to first make a thorough survey of the Korean women.

Kato said that, aside from Seoul and P'yongyang, no other government has approached

Tokyo about the so-called "comfort women."

He declined to say whether Tokyo would apologize to other governments as it has to Seoul and P'yongyang.

He made the remark one day after new evidence was made public suggesting that then War Minister Gen. Hideki Tojo was partly to the practice of conscripting women from Korea and other Asian countries to serve in frontline military brothels.

Kato acknowledged that the government is examining large volumes of documents found at the Defense Agency library pertaining to the dispatch of tens of thousands of "comfort women" to such brothels.

On Thursday Hideko Ito, an opposition Social Democratic Party legislator, made public a

1942 telegram found at the library addressed to Tojo from a Japanese Imperial Army commander seeking permission to dispatch brothel managers to Borneo.

The telegram was sent from the Japanese Imperial Army forces in Taiwan to Tojo.

"Regarding a request I have received from South Theater Headquarters to dispatch 50 comfort natives to Borneo, I ask your permission to send the following three selected by the military police as (brothel) managers," the telegram said.

Japan maintains that the issue of compensation for the Korean women was closed with a 1965 agreement on war reparations that paved the way for establishing relations with South Korea.

The government, however, has said it will closely follow a lawsuit

filed last December by three former Korean "comfort women" who are seeking compensation from Japan.

Japanese lawyer Kenichi Takagi, assigned to the three Korean plaintiffs, was quoted as saying the documents showed the government and the military were "completely in charge of the prostitution."

Other War Ministry documents were released Thursday showing how the army supervised recruitment and the management of the brothels.

According to one rule, "comfort girls can take walks every day only between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. and walks at other times require the chief officer's consent." (Compiled from Kyodo News Service and AFP-Jiji reports).

Feb 8, 1992

Veteran shows sketches of 'comfort girls'

MATSUE, Shimane — A former Japanese Imperial Army medical orderly on Thursday displayed sketches for the media that he drew during World War II of "comfort girls" being tested for venereal diseases.

Hoichi Fujiwara, 79, a former medical orderly now living in Nita Town, Shimane Prefecture, worked at field hospitals in the southern part of Taiwan from 1944 to the end of the war.

He drew 65 sketches representing scenes in and around the hospitals. Ten of the pictures depict "comfort girls."

According to Fujiwara, some 200 teen-age "comfort girls" were forced into prostitution and examined for venereal diseases once a week. They were mostly from Korea, but included women from China and Taiwan, he said.

He said women infected with venereal diseases were expelled with no food.

"Japan should compensate the women for the suffering caused by the atrocities of its army," he said.

North and South Korea have demanded apologies and compensation for actions of the Japanese Imperial Army during the occupation of the Korean Peninsula.



Sketches of "comfort girls."

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Feb 2, 1992

FROM PILLAR TO POST: THE DAILY LIFE OF KOREANS IN JAPAN

In being forced to share the hardships and sufferings of Japan's colonial and military aberration, Koreans were battered from pillar to post. Most Koreans were involved in hard labour (e.g. in 1929, half were stevedores, coolies or miners). To feed Japan's military expansion, they were assigned to munitions works, and to the primary industries, most often in wretched, dangerous living conditions for the lowest wages. In Hokkaido, for instance, Koreans made up 43% of mine workers, and 65% of them worked deep in the coal pits. Language barriers, illiteracy and racial discrimination prevented Koreans from learning skills, and from gaining permanent employment or managerial positions.

In general, Koreans lived in crowded, slum-type dwellings, were transient, and were deprived of all save minimal education. In 1936, for example, only 1 of 3 Korean children attended school. Poverty and powerlessness instilled in Korean parents a self-demeaning hopelessness. Many children were put to work, often from an early age, to help the family survive. For those Koreans who did attend Japanese schools, this was another degrading experience. The totalitarian race concept of the Emperor as the father-godhead of a pure race family was stressed, while anything considered not Japanese (i.e. Korean) was belittled.

Daily life taught Koreans bitter lessons about themselves and the Japanese system of repression and control. Two events especially fixed in the minds of Koreans an image

of the Japanese and their views of Koreans.

The first was the March 1st Independence Movement in Korea. The non-violent, national demonstration of the Korean will was ruthlessly crushed by the Japanese military and police. Thousands were killed, tens of thousands imprisoned, and the will of the people suppressed. The fact that the movement had its initial impetus from Koreans in Japan, and that tacit approval of the harsh put-down was given by other colonial powers (Britain, France, U.S.A.), were not lost upon the Japanese.

The second incident began on September 1, 1923, the day of the Great Kanto Earthquake in the area around Tokyo. In an attempt to handle social unrest, the Japanese police initiated rumours which were spread quickly by the media about Koreans starting fires, poisoning wells and rioting against imperial authority. These rumours stirred the Japanese to form vigilante groups to "guard against Koreans". They hunted down Koreans by their accents, using bamboo spears, clubs and bare hands to kill them. Not a few Japanese with strong rural dialects also fell victim. In all, 6,661 Koreans were murdered, over half of the Koreans resident in the Tokyo area at that time.

Today, very few Japanese know anything about the March 1st incident in Korea or the 1923 massacre in Japan. However, to Koreans in Japan, they are an indelible part of their history, lessons confirming the experiences under both colonial and post-colonial imperial race systems of Japan.

THE PRESENT SITUATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS OF KOREANS IN JAPAN

Our struggle against the fingerprinting policy in the 1980s showed clearly that the base of the human rights of the Koreans in Japan is painfully frail.

The Japanese government, as well as the majority of the Japanese, has fiercely oppressed our fight to win human rights in Japan. Japan, which has accepted the International Human Rights Covenants and is known to the world as a democracy, is in fact forcing assimilation of the Korean minority. That is to say, to the Koreans living in Japan, the Japanese imperialism still lives.

I. Abolition of the Policy of Fingerprinting at Age Sixteen.

In Japan fingerprints are taken of people who commit crimes. However, fingerprinting is forced on outsiders, i.e., members of other nationalities, as a means of oppression and control, to obtain their submission, with the threat of criminal penalty.

At age sixteen, a most susceptible age emotionally, our children are forced to submit to criminal-like fingerprinting, for the sole reason that they are of Korean parentage. This policy applies to the Korean children of even the third and fourth generations. Needless to say, no fingerprinting is required of Japanese children. The Japanese government also requires that the Alien Registration Card be carried at all times, infraction of which is punishable by law. These policies, we believe, are against the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, of which Article 26 reads:

All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

II. Guarantee of the Right of Re-entry.

Article 12-4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights reads, "No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of the right to enter his own country."

Koreans have lived in Japan for nearly 100 years now, having produced third, fourth, and even fifth generations. However, their right to free travel is not pursuant to the provisions of the law but is arbitrarily controlled by the discretion of the attorney general.

A conscientious objector to fingerprinting has once requested "permission to re-enter" as she was about to leave Japan for the United States to study. Her request was denied because she had refused fingerprinting. She went ahead to the U.S. but when she returned, her right to permanent residence had been taken away. Her right to return to her own country, the country of her birth, was infringed.

In 1985, when the Alien Registration Cards were being renewed by a large number of aliens, the Japanese government used the re-entry policy as a whip to force fingerprinting on them. In spite of the threat, 13,000 either deliberately delayed or refused fingerprinting.

The policy of "re-entry permission" must be abolished immediately.

III. Guarantee of the Right to Reside qua Right.

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads, "All human beings

are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

Although the Koreans living in Japan have now produced third, fourth, and fifth generations, there is no guarantee to their right to reside in Japan as a human right *qua* right. The right to reside, we believe, should not be given by the government but should be enjoyed by all as a matter of human right. No person, for any reason, should be forcibly deported.

According to the widely accepted view of international law today, nationality is not to be considered as a symbolic attribute of a nation but as a right, the right to reside in a defined territory, i.e., territorial nationality. Thus it is that the right to nationality is guaranteed in the International Human Rights Covenants. Article 24-2, 3 reads, "2. Every child shall be registered immediately after birth 3. Every child has the right to acquire a nationality"

IV. Guarantee of Right to Political Participation.

Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provides:

Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions:

(a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;

(b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors;

(c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.

We have demanded in open letters to the mayor of Kitakyushu-Shi (1975), the governor of Fukuoka Prefecture (1976), and the Prime Minister of Japan (1978) our right to vote for and be elected to the municipal legislature, the prefectural legislature, and the national Diet.

Before World War II the Koreans living in Japan had the right to take part in the political process, having elected representatives to city, prefectural, and national legislatures. They had such a right in an Imperial Japan but lost it the day Japan became democratic.

There is at present a widespread campaign to elect and be elected as representatives to municipal and prefectural legislatures. In view of the fact that 30 percent of significant administrative affairs is handled at the local level and the remainder at the national level it is imperative that the right to participate in the political process, including the national level, be recognized, if only to win further minority rights.

V. Guarantee of the Right to Its Own Culture and Use of Its Own Language as an Ethnic Minority.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 27) provides:

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.

VI. Conclusion.

On May 2, 1947, the Japanese government decreed in Article 11 of the Alien Registration Law, which was the Emperor's last edict, that Taiwanese and Koreans living in

Japan were to be considered aliens for the time being. And on April 28, 1952, the day the San Francisco Peace Treaty went into effect, the government deprived en masse all Koreans living in Japan of their nationality. This was the government's calculated step toward future expulsion and anticipated international criticism.

Koreans living in Japan are not "aliens" but, in terms of international law, an ethnic minority. As such they should enjoy the rights guaranteed by international human rights covenants.

The fact that Japanese society consists not only of the Yamato people but of the Ainu and Korean people, too, ought to be legally recognized.



Jan. 15, 1965, in Tokyo, Anti-Fingerprinting Demonstration by the Korean Christian Church in Japan.

Pastor Campaigns For Koreans' Rights

By Sumire Kunieda
Staff Writer

Pastor Choi Chang-hwa, a Korean human rights advocate who successfully made the Japan Broadcasting Corp. (NHK) pronounce Korean residents names in the Korean style years ago, plans to visit the United Nations in Geneva Tuesday to seek its support for Korean residents in Japan.

Choi, the president of the Association Fighting for the Acquisition of Human Rights in Japan, claims that the Japanese government is violating international conventions which guarantee the rights of minorities because it does not provide voting rights and Japanese nationality to Korean residents.

Choi first devoted himself to a campaign against segregation and discrimination toward Korean residents in their neighborhoods and workplaces.

Now the 58-year-old Korean pastor is campaigning for the right of Korean residents to possess their own culture, including the right of having their names pronounced in the Korean way.

The active Korean pastor filed a lawsuit with the Kitakyushu District Court against NHK in



Choi Chang-hwa

1976, demanding that NHK pronounce his name in the Korean fashion and write it in Hangul.

He failed in the court battle, however NHK did begin reading foreigners' names in the same way as practiced in their home countries.

"A name has its own culture. I demand that the media write my name in Hangul and Chinese characters," he said.

He was born in 1930 into a Christian family in Sonchon, North Korea. During the co-muni-

cation by Japan, Christians were persecuted and the Japanese forced Koreans to worship at Shinto shrines.

Choi said, "I knew few Korean students who could go on to junior high school as Japanese did. However, I didn't feel any discrimination. I didn't mind visiting shrines and I went to junior high school with my Japanese friends. I was a Christian outside but a Japanese inside. I thought Japanese people were honest and conscientious, otherwise I wouldn't have come to Japan."

Choi, who managed to survive the Korean War and postwar persecution toward Christians by the North Korean government, came to Japan in 1954.

After he graduated from Christian University in Kobe, he became pastor at the Kokura Korean Christian Church, Fukuoka in 1960.

"Even when I heard of Japanese discrimination against Koreans, I could not believe it. A Korean student complained to me that a Japanese high school wouldn't admit him, but I told him that was because he did not try hard enough," he said.

Two incidents changed his im-

age of Japan.

In 1963, a Japanese pastor told him about the slaughter at the time of the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923, where 6,000 Koreans were beaten to death by scared Japanese who believed rumors that Koreans had put poison into wells.

Five years later, he became involved with Kim Hwi-ro, who having a grudge against Japanese society, killed two people with a rifle and held 16 other hostage at a hotel in Shizuoka Prefecture.

In an attempt to persuade him not to kill himself, Choi talked to him at the hotel which was surrounded by police.

After Kim was arrested, Choi said to him, "Do not talk about discrimination, it can't be used as an excuse for homicide. If you claim such after your bloody act, no one will listen to you. Instead I promise I will work for the rights of Koreans."

Since then, he has worked diligently for equality of the Korean residents in Japan.

He says, "Korean residents have been slaves. That means that you are allowed to live only when you obey your master. Now is the time to speak out."

Japan Owns Up Late 1-20

This was not a case of atrocities being committed on the watch of an unsuspecting or negligent military command during a time of war. Acts of inhumanity can and do occur when governments go to war, even when systems are established to prevent the mistreatment of innocents; that is the hideous face of war. But in the case of the enslavement of some 60,000 to 100,000 women, mostly Korean, and their forced prostitution for the benefit of Japanese soldiers in World War II, it was the Japanese army itself that encouraged and supported that purpose.

No more comprehensible is the fact that it has taken the Japanese government nearly 50 years to own up to the cruelty and culpability of its colonial administration in Asia. Until last week, Tokyo had maintained that the Japanese armed forces' notorious degradation of women all over the Pacific theater was the work of private merchants.

On Friday, Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa told the South Korean National Assembly: "Recently, the issue of 'comfort women' in the service of the imperial Japanese army has come to light. I

cannot help feeling acutely distressed over this, and I express my sincerest apology." He also said: "I am determined to nurture in the Japanese people, especially our youth, the courage to face squarely the past facts, understanding for the feelings of the victims and a sense of admonition that these misdeeds should never be repeated."

The problem with the Japanese reaction is not that people like Mr. Miyazawa are not sincere, but rather that it has taken so long for the Japanese to own up to this awful behavior. For it is extremely doubtful whether or when any of this would have come fully to light without (1) the filing of a class-action lawsuit by a few of the surviving victims on the 50th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, (2) Prime Minister Miyazawa's current and long-sought visit to Korea, and (3) the discovery of incriminating military records by a Japanese historian. Given the persistent Japanese rejection of this charge of government involvement over several decades, the likelihood is that the lid would have remained on the cover-up.

— THE WASHINGTON POST.

Other Comment 1-20-41

Time for Tokyo to Pay

When Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa of Japan drew up plans to visit South Korea for a summit meeting on problems between the two countries he knew it was going to be a tough trip. Deep resentment over Imperial Japan's rule of Korea lingers as does friction over Tokyo's refusal to lower trade barriers. But the issue dominating the meeting that ended inconclusively last Saturday was far more dramatic — and embarrassing.

The topic was sex slavery, the brutal behavior of the Japanese Army in dragging innocent girls off the streets and out of school classrooms to work as prostitutes servicing Japanese troops in World War II. It was savage, bestial behavior for which no proper compensation can exist. However, this does not excuse the fact that no attempt to ease the plight of these girls after they had been discarded toward the end of the war was ever made by any Japanese government.

Japan is carefully cultivating relations with the countries it does business with. It has largely shaken off the image of a rapacious, unethical, trade-hungry animal (except among the uncompetitive American car-making fraternity) and is moving toward playing a greater role in world affairs. The last thing Tokyo needs at this juncture is a protracted squabble over events which happened before the majority of the new Japan was born.

Forget face, forget the rewriting of history books and settle this most embarrassing of issues on a direct, government-to-government basis. That is Tokyo's most sensible option. The alternative is to let the wound fester, hoping that the pain will go away. It will only do so once Japan has rid itself of the remnants of its inglorious past. Reparations need not be paid twice, but in this case it was a mistake to pay none at all — a mistake that honor demands be rectified within the lifetimes of the survivors of this cruelty.

— The Bangkok Post.

Of Sex and Lies: Japanese Teacher Debunks 'Comfort Women' My

By David E. Sanger
New York Times Service

WAKO, Japan — When Japan's television networks recently began broadcasting the accounts of Korean women and girls who were kidnapped and forced to serve in battlefield brothels for the Imperial Army, even Japanese who prefer never to think about World War II said they felt shamed by the years of agony the women endured.

But the Japanese government had the same ready answer it has had for decades: A few words of sympathy for the tens of thousands of victims whose lives were shattered, and a curt dismissal of their demands for government compensation.

The brothels, Japan's Foreign Ministry said, were run by private entrepreneurs, not the government.

No one in the Foreign Ministry, though, was ready for Yoshiaki Yoshimi,

Mr. Yoshimi, a history professor with a striking mane of white hair and a knack for coming up with historical documents that Japan would prefer to keep buried, listened to the government's assertions on television in his cramped apartment here last month and knew immediately that the government was rewriting history.

"I was outraged," he said the other day. "And I knew that clear evidence existed that would force the government to acknowledge its responsibility."

Over the last three weeks, with a keen research eye and an impeccable sense of timing, Mr. Yoshimi singlehandedly debunked the myth that the Japanese government had not organized and run the brothels. He created a sensation in Tokyo and Seoul and forced Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa to issue a formal apology to the Korean people.

Last week, reversing decades of flat refusals, Mr. Miyazawa conceded that the

government would have to find some way of redressing the women's grievances, though he stopped short of promising financial reparations to what Japan euphemistically calls the "comfort women."

In any country it is rare for one citizen to force a government to reverse its course, but it is particularly rare in Japan, where the social pressures not to challenge the status quo are so overwhelming.

War atrocities are a particular taboo: When construction workers in Tokyo two years ago came across the suspected remains of prisoners of war who were the subjects of cruel medical experiments, no Japanese forensic expert would get near them. Everyone in Japan understands why.

"I have lived here all my life, and I know that Japan only talks about half of its history," Mr. Yoshimi said. "The half where Japan is victimized."

It is widely believed that Japan started

building "comfort stations" in the mid-1930s, and 100,000 to 200,000 women were eventually lured or dragged to Japanese battlefronts across Asia. Most were children and teenagers from Korea, a Japanese colony from 1910 to 1945, but many others came from China and a few from Japan itself.

The women were forced to have sex with soldiers, who were often rotated through the "comfort stations" at 15-minute intervals.

With news organizations focused on the 50th anniversary of Pearl Harbor, however, a few of the surviving Korean "comfort women" decided the moment was ripe to press their case.

Three came to Tokyo in December to file a suit for damages against the Japanese government, prompting the government's chief spokesman, Koichi Kato, to reiterate that Japan considered all of its war reparations to South Korea paid, and

to deny that the army had organized or run the brothels.

Apart from the "comfort women" themselves, no one seemed ready to dispute that reading of history; documents referring to the matter were presumed destroyed in the giant bonfire the Japanese military lit at the end of the war.

As he watched on television, Mr. Yoshimi recalled that a few years ago, combing through the Self-Defense Agency's library to research Japan's use of poison gas during the war, he had tripped across a military order to set up a brothel.

The detail had intrigued him: Born just after the war, he has spent his professional life trying to get a glimpse of it.

Certain that more documents existed that would disprove the government, Mr. Yoshimi returned to the library over the New Year's holiday. In two days of searching, he came up with a small trove,

including one document titled "Researching the Recruitment of Women for Military Brothels."

It ordered the quick construction of "facilities for sexual comfort," to stop the troops occupying China from raping women. It bears the *hanko*, or personal stamps, of leaders of the high command of the army.

"I'm an outsider and this was easy research," Mr. Yoshimi said. "Inside the library are researchers who must have known these documents exist."

Mr. Yoshimi handed the documents to a reporter at the Asahi Shimbun, one of Japan's largest dailies, just before Mr. Miyazawa traveled to South Korea for a meeting with President Roh Tae Woo.

Almost overnight, the government's arguments collapsed. "What I found," Mr. Yoshimi said, "was just the final blow to a weakening government position."

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