

**SUMMARY:  
NO ORGANIZED OR FORCED RECRUITMENT:  
MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT COMFORT WOMEN  
AND THE JAPANESE MILITARY**

The wartime “comfort women” myth continues, as noted by Professor Ikuhiko Hata, to intermittently erupt as an explosive and divisive historical issue. Despite the lack of historical evidence that links the military to the direct procurement of “comfort women,” the Japan-bashing crowd persists. Several years ago, the anti-Japan faction rallied against alleged Japanese economic imperialism. Today, the banner has changed and the march against Japan is supposedly in the name of “human rights”.

As Professor Hata points out there are at least two contradictions in today’s “comfort women” debate. First, there is a lack of global perspective on the military’s use of prostitution to keep positive morale. The recent House Subcommittee on Asia’s hearing was entitled “Protecting the Human Rights of Comfort Women.” Rather than review the use of “comfort women” by the U.S., for example, the hearing focused solely on Japan’s alleged wartime abuses. By contrast, Korean “comfort women” are still found to this day around U.S. military bases in Korea. The lack of perspective of the House Subcommittee is instructive. Rather than address the South Vietnamese “comfort women” left behind following the end of the Vietnam War, the Subcommittee chose instead to condemn domestic policy of a close ally. During World War II, the Allies as a matter of course ran brothels for use its military personnel; certainly, no one country has a corner on moral behavior and in protecting the dignity of women.

The second contradiction Professor Hata points out is the lack of Japanese resolve to give a clear stand on the issue. On one hand, it is pointed out that Japan has expressed its contrition over the wartime use of prostitutes, many of whom had no other way of earning a living, with the infamous Kono Statement. On the other hand, the Statement is rife with errors, such that the statement should either be reworded or entirely rewritten. Prime Minister Abe’s stance on the issue is basically tepid support of the Statement, which the foreign press perceived as “renouncement”. Although the issue could have been resolved by thorough investigation of the wartime evidence, including American records, the end result is the House introduced for consideration a non-binding resolution condemning Japan for misdeeds that have no historical foundation.

This leads to a key point – that had the esteemed House members read English language rebuttals to the alleged coercion of the “comfort women,” there might not be so much anxiety as there is now on either side of the Pacific. There are English language documents written during the Pacific War detailing the Japanese “comfort women” system. Based on the kinds of noise coming from the House on this issue, it is obvious that few have read them. Greater understanding by the American people will only come from being properly informed.