

Interview with Ms. Marguerita J. Hamer-Monod de Froideville, Chairperson of the Project Implementation Committee in the Netherlands (PICN)

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Wada: Thank you for your agreeing to our request of interview.

Hamer: Okay.

Wada: Now our organization, the Asian Women's Fund is closing activities, so we decided together the testimonies of people who joined and contributed to the AWF. This is the first interview for all our oral history projects, so thank you again for joining us. First of all, we would like to ask you about your family life in Indonesia, especially your life under Japanese military occupation.

Hamer: Okay. I was born just before the war broke out in September 1941, and my parents lived in Surabaya city on the East.

Mr. Wada: I have been to there 2 months ago.

Hamer: You have been to Surabaya. Well that is wonderful my birth place. And my father worked at the Escompto Bank, it's a bank, I don't know exactly, it's a bank. I was 2 months old when my father had to leave us because he was called for his duty to be a soldier. My mother and I stayed in Surabaya in our house, but very soon we had to move because my mother didn't feel very safe on her own, so she went to live with an aunt of me, and from that place we had to leave several times to other places and leave everything behind. In October '43, my mother and I had to go into a the city-camp in Surabaya. We stayed there, I think, about 3 months, and then we had to move to another camp in the middle of Java, that was called Ambarawa, and we went there by train. The train was completely packed with women and children and it was an awful travel because it was very hot and he train moved slowly and stopped several times a day.

Finally we reached Ambarawa and there we were put in a small room with several other women. We were lucky it was a small room, because here were also big rooms with lot of women and that was not very nice, a small room was better. And we stayed there until 5th of May, 1945.

I know this date because that day in Holland, there was the liberation of the war but we were still in the camps. On that day, 5th of May, 1945. We had to walk to another camp called Banyu Biru. That is about 8Km from Ambarawa and my mother was sick and I was very sick, because we didn't have much food and my mother had lost a lot of

kilograms. She was not healthy and I was not healthy either. We had to walk to Banyu Biru and that was a hard camp because there were lots of people. Most of the people was very ill and a lot of starvation there. I also became very ill there and my mother thought she would lose me because I had a very big oedema-stomach from hunger. But we managed to go on.

After the Capitulation of Japan

On the 15th August, Japan capitulated, but we didn't hear this news at that moment. It was only on 23rd August we heard that the war was over. I didn't know it because I was only 4 years old at that time. I don't remember very much but my mother wrote in her diary so I can tell you about this. Because I read a diary, I told the same story in the documentary also. She went with me to Semarang, it was a very hard trip because in Indonesia Berciap began at the time, do you know what that is, Berciap?. The people of Indonesia wanted to be free and there was a fight, a war against colonialism. It was very dangerous for my mother to go to Semarang because the people of Indonesia were hostile against the Dutch people, of course. But she managed to arrive in Semarang, and we went to my Aunt's place. She lived there in a house, and we stayed there for a short time.

My mother wanted to know about my father of course. She didn't know if he was still alive or where he was. She didn't know. One day there was a fight outside in the streets and after the fight, she turned on the radio. There was music and after the music, someone said "This is radio Singapore and you heard a song played by some people...", then she heard the name of my father. The voice on the radio said the song was played by Do Vincente and by Charlie Monod de Froideville. She was quite astonished. "Is this my husband? Is he in Singapore?" She wrote to radio Singapore and her letter was received by an Uncle of me who was working there for the Red Cross. This uncle also was called Charlie Monod-de Froideville, the same name as my father's, and he wrote to my mother "This is not your Charlie but this is me." But he knew that my father was still alive and that he was in Thailand, I don't remember the place now, well in a prison camp there.

My mother would go there for a family-reunion and well she went on a boat with me to Thailand. When she arrived in Bangkok, she had to go with me to another women prisoner's camp, in which all the women, who wanted to be re-united with their husbands, had to stay, in order to wait for the reunion. My mother knew that the camp of my father was south of Bangkok, but they wanted her to go to camp 100 km North of Bangkok. So she said "I don't go there". She hid herself with me until the evening.

There was a truck going to the camp of my father and she went on to that truck on her own with me. She came to the camp of my father and she was the first women with me as a little child to come to that camp. All the men in that camp, English, Dutch, they came to the entrance, and said well that was a white blond woman with a little blond child, and everybody was very astonished. Then my father also came. He looked and he said "Oh this is my wife and my child." So they found each other.

The commander of the camp was so nice to give my father, my mother and me a small room for the family and so we lived there for about 3 months. I was very much spoiled by the men in the camp because I was the only child in that camp. The men gave me little playing things, which were made by the men themselves (I still have some of those things). After a few months a lot of women entered that camp and finally all the women and children (also my mother and I) had to move to another camp. But my parents were very happy that they've found each other. In 1946 we went on the ship to Holland to repatriate.

Impression of the Japanese Army

Wada: One thing. How was your impression of the Japanese army?

Hamer: My impression, my impression...well I didn't have any impression because I was too young. I was 2 years old when I went into the camp and I was only 4 years old when the war was over. So I didn't know anything. I only remember vague situations. I remember the boots of the soldiers, and the voices, yelling voices and so on. I don't remember very much now.

Arima: Did your mother ever write something about impression of Japanese army in the diary?

Hamer: My mother yes. She wrote that some women were hit by the Japanese because they did something wrong, in their eyes, they didn't bow deep enough or something like that, so my mother's impression was not good. She hated the Japanese and my father and mother educated me with deep hate towards Japanese. They didn't want to buy anything which had to do with Japanese or has been fabricated in Japan or something. They didn't buy anything made in Japan. So I was educated with a lot of hate against Japanese. My mother was not glad at all that I joined JES because she said to me "You cannot trust the Japanese." So this is how deep she hated.

Wada: Your mother is still alive?

Hamer: No, my parents died. When my father died in 1994, I had to clean up the house and sorted out things and then I found the diaries, I didn't know they existed because my parents never wanted to speak about the war. It was deeply hidden. Yes.

So I found the dairies and well I was very shocked by it. And I was shocked in a way that I had to have treatment by a psychiatrist because I was deeply down because of what I read. This was quite a shock for me.

Post-war Life

Wada: Please move to your life of post-war period

Hamer : Yes, I will tell you about my father. He was a lawyer before the war, lawyer in Dutch East-Indian law, but in Holland, he could not use his study because he wasn't a lawyer in the Dutch law, so after the war he had to change his profession. He became a Dentist. That's a big change. After the war, there was a course to become a dentist very quickly. Nowadays it takes 4 or 5 years to become a dentist, in those days, that course only took 2 and a half year. And he became a dentist in 2 and a half year. So when he became a dentist we moved to Rotterdam and we lived there. And I went to school there: lower school, junior school, junior high school, and its called in Holland HBS, which means higher education, and after the HBS I went to university in Leiden to study Law. Then I studied law in Leiden as well as in Amsterdam, I graduated in Amsterdam in Criminology Law. So I became criminologist, but in those days I got married and I was pregnant and when I finished my study, so I had a baby, my eldest daughter. Well I didn't do anything with my studies, because I had to raise a child and I got another child, second daughter and then son, so I had three children. My husband was pharmacologist and he had a pharmacy. We lived in the Hague and I raised the children there, and I was a housewife and a mother, and I never practiced the law, no. I only graduated and that's all.

To Solve Parents' Hatred

When my father died in 1994 as I told you, I found the dairies. My father and mother both were very angry at Japan that there never has been sufficient compensation, nor excuses, apologies and so on. So this was something that my father and mother were very angry about. And when my father died, I said to myself "Now I will try to do something." So I became a member of JES(the Foundation of Japanese Honorary Debts), a board member in September 1994, I think. I stayed being a board member of JES until I started the PICN. That was in 1998. So 4 years. It gave me a good feeling that I could do something for the Dutch war victims and especially for my father's remembrance.

In 1996 my mother died, very suddenly. She wasn't glad that I joined JES. She said to me, "You have to deal with Japanese people and you cannot trust them." That was why

she didn't like it, but afterwards I think it was good that I joined JES, because otherwise I never could have done anything for the comfort women. I am very glad that I did this work and that I knew now Japanese people. First time I was invited by the government to visit Japan, I had double feelings. I have to go to Japan, but my father and mother wouldn't like me to go. I have to hate the Japanese, but I don't hate them. That gave me very mixed feelings.

Wada: When was your first visit to Japan?

Hamer: My first visit was in 1999.

The Comfort Women Issue

Wada: In JES, you were a specially engaged with activities towards comfort women?

Hamer : Well I was a board member of JES, when the negotiations between the Asian Women's Fund and JES started. And because I was the only women in the board of JES, who lived in the Hague, they asked me to do the negotiations. There were 2 other women, but they didn't live in the Hague. It was necessary to have someone in the neighborhood who could always be present at the negotiation, so they asked me to do it. That's why Mr. Ungerer and Mr. Peter and I, all 3 living in the Hague, members of JES, did the negotiations. And 2 representatives of the Japanese Embassy, Mr. Miyahara and Mr. Matsubayashi, we negotiated with for about 2 years.

Wada: Please talk about the negotiation of JES with the Japanese government,

Hamer : yes

Wada: How was it begun?

Hamer : For a short time the negotiations were done by Mrs. De Pijper, secretary of JES. She wanted some research project in Holland. I thought that a research project wasn't good for the women, so I wanted something for the women themselves. At that time I took the place of Mrs. De Pijper, together with Mr. Ungerer and Mr. Peter. It was rather difficult to come to an agreement, it took a long time, but we wanted to have something as a project that would be good for the women involved. Research project, we, (Mr. Ungerer, Mr. Peter and I) didn't want, so finally we came to an agreement that the project became a medical and welfare project, by which women could buy medicines and things for welfare . At first, the Japanese requested that, when the women would buy something from that money, they had to give bills, receipts. But we thought that to give receipts of what they would have bought, was very humiliating for the women, so we insisted no receipts being needed. This took a long time, about 3 months arguing with the AWF. Finally with this problem of the receipts I went to General Huyser, who had been asked to be the president of the PICN. He agreed with

me and said "No, no receipts." Then he wrote in a letter to Ambassador Ikeda in Holland, that if the Japanese would insist receiving receipts, he didn't want to become the president of the PICN. This was a very strong letter: only 3 lines and Mr. Ikeda was very shocked. Mr. Ikeda told me one day later, we would need no receipts, so I was very happy. It took me 3 months but Mr. Huyser only wrote 1 letter. It was okay, so I was very glad.

Wada: This problem of your reluctance to hand the receipt is recorded in our material.

Hamer : Yes, okay, it was a big problem for us.

The Contents of the AWF project in the Netherlands

Wada: Now I can understand. At first what was Japanese proposal to you? Or what was your proposal?

Hamer : Our proposal was that we would like to have money, we could pay to the victims, and the proposal of Mr. Miyahara and Matsubayashi was finally the project with medical and welfare goods and/or services. We agreed to the medical and welfare project because they told us that that money could be not only used for welfare medicines and other health things but also for refurnishing or for going to Indonesia to visit the grave of family, in the widest possible way. It was agreed that this could all fall under the welfare and health project, so then we agreed.

Arima: So what's your past proposal, which means a kind of state compensation or something?

Hamer : Yes, a kind of atonement money like in Korea.

Arima: Atonement money from government, from state?

Hamer : Yes, that was for sure what those victims still wanted. But that was not possible because of the treaty of San Francisco and Stikker-Yoshida agreement. Mr. Miyahara told us it was not possible to give atonement money to the victims but it has to be in the form of a project. So then they tried to arrange a project where they could still receive money. That is why we came to agree to this project with health and welfare, goods and/or services.

Wada: Last time when you joined our roundtable discussion, you told about your relations with the project of Asian Women's Fund. Atonement money from the people's donation.

Hamer : yes

Wada: And the medical aid from government money, and the prime ministers letter of apology. This is three important elements of our activities

Hamer : Yes, of course, yes.

Wada: Did you hear about these contents in the beginning of the negotiation?

Hamer : Yes. At the beginning of the negotiations, I was not aware that atonement money was not possible, but Mr. Miyahara explained that because of the San Francisco treaty and Stikker-Yoshida Agreement it was not possible to give atonement money, so I became aware of it. That's why finally the agreement became the project of medical and welfare goods and/or services. So this was an agreement with which we could live and it was alright.

Wada: In South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines, such 3 principles were practiced. Didn't you propose these 3 conditions?

Hamer : You mean there was not a proposition of atonement money? No, there was not a proposition for atonement money.

Arima: From the beginning?

Hamer : In the beginning yes. Mr. Miyahara explained to us in the negotiators, that atonement money was not possible in Holland because of the treaties, the post-war treaties. We accepted that so it would become a project. And the life improvement project was accepted by us, yes.

Wada: This is still a big problem.

Hamer : Is it still a problem?

Wada: When we wrote about our activities and your activities in Holland, this point should be very difficult how to explain.

Hamer : Why is that?

Wada: Your explanation is very clear now.

Hamer : Yes, and I remember that in 2001 when I joined the round-table discussion, you asked me why I didn't accept atonement money and I was very astonished and said it wasn't proposed to us because of the treaties, We were explained that it was not possible in Holland because of the post-war treaties. So I was astonished about your question at that time.

Wada: It made a sensation among us.

Hamer : Yes.

Wada: So then you agreed with the medical and welfare aid and you rejected the proposal of handing the receipt, so this money was called project money.

Hamer : Project money, yes.

Wada: Victims are thinking this is "compensation".

Hamer : In a way. I explained that this was from moral responsibility and that the money came from the Japanese government. It was very important for the Dutch victims because there was quite a lot of misunderstanding. Some victims of forced

prostitution did not accept the money because it was from only the "moral responsibility" so, in my knowledge, two women did not want to be recipients of the Asian Women's Fund's money, because they only wanted legal responsibility and money from the state. And in Holland, even some members of JES think it is money from donations of the people so they call it "charity" and JES, they don't like the idea that the Asian Women's Fund gives money to the victims because they still think it is "charity". I explained several times this money came from the Japanese government so this was project money. I don't know why, but they don't want to accept this offer.

The Start of the PCIN

Wada: When you talked to Japanese government, you were as a representative of JES.

Hamer: yes

Wada: And then you agreed and you and your people decided to start the PICN.

Hamer : yes

Wada: Then what was the attitude of JES?

Hamer : Well, JES has documents about all the victims of war, in Indonesia and also about victims of forced prostitution. I said to JES, we had to found a new foundation to implement the project. JES always said that they could not agree with any kind of money, coming from the AWF. They said the compensation money must come directly from the Japanese Government in a legal way. Not via the AWF, because of the moral responsibility of the Japanese Government . To implement the Life Improvement Project I had to leave JES and had to found a new foundation. Mr. Ungerer and Mr. Peter also had to leave JES to become board members of PICN. Then JES agreed that I took the information about the comfort women with me from JES, duplications of course, not the real things, but copies. Before starting the new foundation and Mr. Peter, Mr. Ungerer and I, the negotiators, were still members of the board of JES, we could place advertisements in the JES magazine, in order to reach the victims of forced prostitution, so during the negotiations we worked together. But after founding the PICN, we had to go away from JES. Separation, yes. And we started our own foundation. Mr. Huyser started the foundation together with me, and we were apart from JES. So at that moment the separation was completed and we started our own path.

Wada: And then you began to work towards the comfort women

Hamer: yes.

Wada: You were the first to verify the documents and also you're president of the PICN

Hamer: yes. Mr. Huyser became the president of the PICN in July 1998, but soon his

wife became very ill, and he had to leave the position of the president, so in November I became the president and Mr. Huyser became the main advisor. In that time I also was the person of confidence for the women. We put advertisements in lot of magazines and in papers all over the world and on websites and sent them to the embassies in all the countries. So we reached a lot of victims and we had I think 107 applications, and those letters came at my address. At first I read them and then I thought this lady could be a recipient, I whitened all the personal dates from the letter (for the privacy of the victims), gave the letter a number and then, on the meeting of PICN, these letters were judged by the members of PICN. We could do verifications because the foundation Pelita had a lot of knowledge about these women. One of the advisors of PICN, Mr. Otte, was working at Pelita. Also the organization PUR, where Mr. Huyser is the president, had a lot of information. We could verify very well because of those two organizations. If that was not enough, we could get information from a book, I don't remember the name now (written by Van Velsen). In the book several places of brothels were described, so I could ask the women how did it look like and we could verify very well and very intense. We came to the conclusion that we could accept 75 women as recipients, identified and verified as Comfort Women. And 4 men, of course the men were not involved in the Japanese brothels, but their stories were so terrible, that they couldn't be invented by themselves. The social workers of Pelita did visit those men (also some women) and talked to them. This is how we verified. And of course also the Red Cross information was used.

Wada: What was your criterion for verifications?

Hamer: The criteria. I mention also in my presentation that I make tomorrow. The standards criteria are Dutch nationality at the moment of the event, during World War II, forced by members of Japanese occupation forces, the frequency and the nature of calamity, the causality of diseases and locations.

Wada: Were people chosen as recipients included those people who were raped?

Hamer: Included, yes. But rape must have taken place by several Japanese soldiers, several times.

Wada: Not one time, frequent?

Hamer: Frequent, yes.

The Feelings of the Victims

Wada: And how about the feelings of victims and what they wished.

Hamer: The feelings. You have received that on your seminar last year, in Okinawa. I wrote a long paper, and in this I mentioned lots of about that. That is you have to make

a separation between the Dutch women themselves. In Indonesia, former Dutch East Indies, Dutch women lived, who were completely white, and also women lived, who had some Indonesian blood. It is not nice to say this but I call them "the completely white women", mostly daughters of higher or mid class workers. The fathers were educated. The daughters did not get sexual education. This was not done in those days. So they were never told what would happen after having sex. They didn't know anything about it. And also those "completely white women" lived in big houses with a lot of Indonesian staffs, like nannies, but the parents didn't want the girls to grow up with the Indonesian children. It was clear that relationships between those girls and Asian (Indonesian) men, was not liked by the parents. So when they were forced into prostitution and had to serve Japanese men, Asian men, they felt very humiliated. This was really against their education. Also not only the feelings that they had been raped without knowledge about sex and so on, but also having been raped by Asian men, this was really very hard for them.

The other Dutch women who had some Indonesian blood were mostly from lower class and they were mostly outside the camps. Those mixed blood girls lived in families outside the camps. They were not seen as being of the same level as completely Dutch nor at the same level as completely Indonesian people. Before the war they were in the position of: not accepted by the higher Dutch class nor accepted by Indonesian people, because they were of mixed blood. Living outside the camps, they had a real difficult life because they felt isolated. And the fathers of those families had to go into the Dutch Indonesian military services to be militaries and the mothers and the girls and the little boys stayed at home, so they had to survive in some way. At first they sold furniture or stuff that had some worth and after they were sold out, they tried to sell things like home made foods or home made handkerchiefs or something like that, outside the house. The girls had to work with her mother to sell things. They were also in an isolate position. They were outside the camps so they were free on the streets, when the Kempei-tai came and thought this girl was nice, they just picked the girl from the streets. Their mothers tried to be in the place of the girls, but it was not accepted, so these girls were taken from the streets and they already felt isolated because of their position in the society. They felt very worthless already because they were not accepted by Dutch nor accepted by Indonesians. The girls were taken by the Kempei-tai they felt like worthless object. They didn't have a feeling of self-respect anymore, so they had a very hard time. The Dutch (white) girls were taken from the camps where the Dutch women were united as a group. The girls outside the camp lived with their families. These families were not united as a group with other families.

They had to see how to survive on their own. So in the camps there were sometimes the women protesting against the taking away of the girls and sometimes they succeeded. So this was in short the differences between the completely white girls and the girls with the mixed blood.

Wada: There are such two types among your Dutch recipient?

Hamer: Yes. And the third difference is the married women, women, who were married before the war, as well the white women and the mixed blood women. They thought after having been forced into prostitution, "I feel worthless, but may be not to my husband," so that was a little bit of hope they had. When they were rejected by their husbands afterwards, that was a very bad thing for them too. So they felt very lonely after this violation of their human rights. You have to make a separation between those 3 groups. 1) Women who were married, as well completely white, as mixed blooded. 2) The mixed blooded young girls, and 3) the completely white young girls. So these 3.

Wada: What did the victims wish to have or get?

Hamer: From the project, well that depends on their situation of course. After the war, the Dutch women mostly were repatriated to Holland or to another country like Australia, the United States, England or Canada. Some stayed in Indonesia especially the mixed blood women victims. There are differences because those who repatriated to Holland or immigrated to the United states, Canada, Australia and England. They came in the countries where there was welfare and the society was economically good. On the other hands women who stayed in Indonesia, mostly were Christian women, but Indonesia is a Muslim country, so they were not accepted there. Some of them married a Muslim men and they got a place in the society. Some did not marry and stayed alone. The women, who stayed in Indonesia were very poor. So for those women in Indonesia, the amount of money was very high. With the Project money they could buy a house for instance and furniture. Because in Indonesia the prices are low, so they could buy much more with the money than women in Holland, in Canada, Australia, England or the United States. But I can say that lots of them bought furniture or rebuilding the house, the kitchen or something, and also many went back Indonesia to visit the grave of family member. And also a lot of money was used for medicine and wheelchair. One woman who had breast cancer could not sit in her low chair so she bought a high chair and that sort of things.

The Letter of Prime Minister

Wada: What was the attitude of those victims towards Prime Minister's letter of

apology?

Hamer: For all of them it was very very important. A lot of them living in Holland, phoned to me and said they were so grateful to finally have received letter of apology and I got letters from women overseas in which they told me that they were very very happy that finally there were some apologies, and, in general they said : this letter made the acceptance of the project money much easier for them. So the letter of apology I think was more important than the money.

Wada: How was the attitude of your government towards your activity?

Hamer: Our government could not be involved in this project, because our government had signed the San Francisco treaty and agreement of Stikker-Yoshida, so they didn't want to have anything to do with this project. But they wished us luck of course, and that was all, nothing very special that I can say that the government did for us.

Wada: .JES has no relation to government?

Hamer: No, JES is also a private foundation. When the Asian Women Fund wanted the negotiations, I think you went first to our government, but our government told you to go to JES. They did the negotiations. The Dutch Government didn't want to, and couldn't do the negotiations, because they had signed the treaties of course. I understand they couldn't. No.

Finishing the Activities of the PICN

Wada: Generally how your people's attitude after the activities of the PICN?

Hamer: You mean the Dutch population? In Holland, when we started this project, the members of the board of the PICN and the advisor, we agreed that we have to be very careful, because the subject was very delicate. So we agreed not to come out in open, not media attention to it. So we acted very quietly. Only at the start of the project there were some journalist and it was mentioned in the papers and at the conclusion there were some television and some papers. But in general we worked very quietly and we didn't want any press or any media involved because the subject was very delicate.

Wada: So what your evaluation of PICN?

Hamer: I was very happy to do this for the victims and for the Asian Women's Fund because I got a feeling I've done something also for my parents and this was the first reason that I went to JES, for my parents. And to do something for some victims was the reason why I joined JES and finally I joined the PICN. I'm very glad I did it because it was a sort of relief for me too. It was a sort of healing process for me, for my feeling, my personal feelings. And I can say I don't hate Japanese anymore. That is a good feeling for me. Yes. It is the one of the thousands of stories of the victims. In the

documentary you'll see more stories.

Wada: Thank you

Arima: Thank you very much.