

VISIT OF MR IWAMURA AND KIYO FURUSAWA

3/9/1993

Dear Jack,

Tom Nisbit, Max and I met Mr.Iwamura and Kiyo at Tullamarine airport on a glorious sunny day on Thursday the 12th at about 4.35pm. Tom was toey, and I sensed he had many reservations about the coming meeting. (No doubt his feelings were shared by many of the other boys who decided to meet with their former foe). I remember thinking at the time how little the Timorese would have appreciated how momentous the meeting between old adversaries was and what courage and generosity of spirit, on both sides, it required.

The meeting between the two old soldiers was very poignant for us on-lookers. The towering scot and the slight Asian man, both polite, but a little diffident. Then suddenly the occasion became relaxed and warm as Mr.Iwamura pointed proudly to his double diamond lapel badge and Kiyo remarked how delighted and happy he was to receive it with Mr.Iwamura breaking in and saying in English, "very proud, very proud".

On Thursday evening our Japanese guests met with over 70 members (both Timorese and Australian) of the Talks for Timor campaign. At this meeting Mr.Iwamura gave an account of his career in East Timor and was questioned about it by Australian members of the audience. Then he and Kiyo told us of the work of the East Timor solidarity groups in Japan and briefed us on what the election of the new Japanese government will mean for their work. They are optimistic claiming that four members of the new cabinet are members of East Timor solidarity groups. The Timorese were quick to indicate to them that in Australia the current government made very encouraging noises regarding Timor before they came to power! In the audience were Tom Hyland from Australian Associated Press (ALP) who wrote a long article and a reporter from 3ZZZ a local community radio station, which put a half hour program together from the meeting. This went to air on the 31st of August.

Friday morning our Japanese friends met members of the Victorian branch at Tom Nisbet's house. Present were Jack Fox, Fred Broadhurst and Paul Costelloe. All present then adjourned to Sherbrooke Lodge, a distinguished restaurant in the Dandenongs. Also present was a TV crew from the SBS program dateline which recorded the meeting at Tom's home and then followed us to Sherbrooke Lodge. We spent a few pleasant hours chatting, sipping and dining together in between the TV crew interviewing all the ex soldiers. Its hard to believe just how much filming is required to make a couple of minutes of television. It was, I believe, a very successful day. The TV crew had been alerted to the visit of Mr.Iwamura and the reason for it by Colin South, who had been contacted by Tom Nisbet.

That evening Mr.Iwamura met with three members of FRETILIN and after they left he met a lady representing the

Timorese Chinese community in Melbourne and a Timorese academic in Melbourne. The Timorese academic was from Bagia (where Mr Iwamura had been based during his time in East Timor) and it turned out that his uncle had been one of Mr.Iwamura's closest friends on East Timor. The uncle was still alive in East Timor, surviving both imprisonment by the Portuguese for working with Mr.Iwamura in the building of a road from Bagia to Uato Carabau, and by the Indonesians for aiding the guerillas. As you can imagine Iwamura San was delighted. He immediately made a tape recorded message to be sent to his old friend.

On Saturday morning another radio interview. This time with the East Timorese program on ethnic radio, which went to air on the Thursday the 19th of August. The radio interview was followed by a meeting with the Australia East Timor Association (AETA) with the purpose of organising a method of consolidating the efforts of the various Timor support groups world wide. In the afternoon Shohachi and Kiyo went to watch the rehearsal of a young Timorese dance troop and to meet with the young members. The SBS TV crew were again on hand to film the afternoon activities. (The TV program was shown on Monday 16th at 7pm). Saturday evening another delegation of Timorese met with our guests, this time from UDT.

Our guests were interviewed for a one hour radio program at 3CR, a Melbourne community radio station with the largest listening audience, on Sunday morning. This program went to air on 24th August. Shopping in the afternoon for Kiyo and Shohachi which meant they missed the football. Kiyo has promised to come back and see a live game in the future. Then to a formal reception and dinner with representatives of the Melbourne Timorese community where Mr.Iwamura formally apologised for his part in the war in East Timor. He was questioned very closely for over two hours by members of the community present, several of whom had fathers killed by the Japanese. As those who have met Kiyo and Mr Iwamura will appreciate they handled the situation very well. He recounted many incidents when Timorese had helped him when he was sick or hungry, explaining that one of the reasons he speaks out on East Timor's behalf is a way of thanking those Timorese. For me the most touching moment of this evening was when the President of the Timorese Association of Victoria, with tears in her eyes, said, "All my life I have regarded with loathing any Timorese who helped the Japanese. After listening to Mr Iwamura I realise these Timorese people also have a human face".

On Monday morning the 12th of August ABC radio national news woke me at 6am regarding the visit. I believe an extract from it was broadcast on the national news that morning but I did not hear it nor do I remember what I said. It must have conveyed something intelligent because I have been amazed by the large numbers of people who have been giving be stick about it ever since! Tom Nisbet conveyed our

guests to the airport and saw them safely enroute to Sydney. The one thing I am sad about is that Paddy Kenneally would not have been there to welcome them. He would so have enjoyed talking to Iwamura San.

Regards

Patsy.

P.S. Thankyou for the cutting from the British press. I am always happy to get that sort of material. Nice to see Mr Calvert is still alive and taking an interest in the antipodes. From what Kiyoo and Mr Iwamura told me Jack it seems to me you must have put in a great deal of work in a very short time to make this visit a success - thankyou and Bob Smythe and the other lads who made them feel so welcome. I do not know what impact the visit will have had in Japan but as far as Australia is concerned it all helps to keep the East Timor situation up front and often spin offs from events like this visit only become clear some time down the track. The one thing that is clear is that the pressure on Jakarta over East Timor continues in spite of everything they try to do to keep it off the front burner. The Clinton regime is certainly putting the screws on the Indonesians and if the Japanese administration follows suit then even I would become optimistic about some sort of a settlement.

Looking forward to seeing you over the Christmas period, regards to Dolys and John.

Keep well.

Patsy.