

THE BURMA CAMPAIGN SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

September 2008

Number 13

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR.

It was a great sadness to all of us that Masao Hira Kubo could no longer take the Chair at this year's AGM and a minute's silence was observed in his memory.

The main question discussed by those who attended was whether BCS should continue to exist or should be closed down. The death of the Chairman and the resignation of the Deputy Chairman in December 2007, and the increasing age of all the other Japanese and British Burma Campaign veterans, who no longer felt able to take a leading role in the Society's affairs, made it essential that this problem should be addressed. In addition, it had so far not proved possible, despite considerable effort, to find a new Deputy Chairman and with the passage of time the membership was gradually decreasing. There was also the pressing need to raise funds and to find younger people to help with running the Society



Akiko Macdonald

Most of the veterans present felt that Anglo-Japanese reconciliation had been substantially achieved and that, given all the difficulties, BCS should now be closed down. However, voices were raised among those present who felt that this was premature, and that a final decision should be deferred until at least the next AGM in order to give the new Chairperson an opportunity to see whether, and on what basis, the Society might continue its activities. A Resolution to the latter effect was then proposed, duly seconded and passed.

Akiko Macdonald

SIXTH ANNIVERSARY LUNCH.

On 16th May, the day of the AGM, a Lunch to celebrate the Sixth Anniversary of the launch of the Burma Campaign Society was held at the Royal Overseas League Club, and was attended by Mr. Kenji Hiramatsu, the Japanese Consul General, and two members of the Embassy staff.

Among the twenty-three guests who were present were Philip Malins, Phillida Purvis, Akiko Macdonald, Pauline Martin, Keiichiro Komatsu, Tomoyo Nakao, James Evans, David Charles, Jeffrey Bateman, Mrs. Hayashi, Mrs. Kobayashi, John White and, of course, Thomas Bruin, who had so generously given his time to organising the lunch and to making it possible for BCS to use the Club's premises during both morning and afternoon..



Thomas Bruin

John White

MEMORIAL TRIBUTES TO MASAO HIRAKUBO OBE.

Editor's Note.

As a full page, formal Obituary of Masao was printed in The Times of 2nd April 2008, and since he was so familiar to the readers of this Newsletter and to all the Members of BCS, it seemed appropriate on this occasion to concentrate on some of the many more personal tributes to a great man who was so well loved,

A LETTER FROM AN OLD COMRADE

Dear Hirakubo-san,

Namu-Amida-Butsu.

Every year for a number of years now, at the time of the cherry blossom, you had been visiting Shogyoji Temple here in Japan and attending the Eitaiko Ceremony.

Last year, too, you and I visited Shogyoji together and you were so happy to be able to speak to the Head Priest and Reverend Kojun Shinohara. You looked very well and promised to come and see them again.

To be informed now, so suddenly, of your departure from this life, I am left with a feeling of great loss and overwhelming sadness. I really miss you.

Every time we saw you on our visits to London, you would take us to many different places. Thank you very much indeed for giving us so many happy memories.

I would simply like to pronounce the Nembutsu to express my deepest gratitude.

With palms together.



**Masao Hirakubo at
Three Wheels in 2007**

Satoru Yanagi
27th April 2008

A MEMORIAL ADDRESS AT THREE WHEELS.

At today's Service I would like to dedicate my Memorial Address with deep humility to the brave soul of that truly great old gentleman, the late Mr. Masao Hirakubo.

Alongside my heartfelt thanks to him for all his efforts over the years, both openly and secretly, I would like to express my deep sadness at losing such a great man who, as Chairman of the Japanese Residents' Association, worked so hard for the improvement of Anglo-Japanese friendship in this country.

In particular, ever since the establishment of our Branch Temple in London, we were in constant receipt of his sympathetic cooperation with the Dharma Movement at Three Wheels.

It was Mr. Hirakubo's sincere desire and constant dedication, too, together with his genuinely selfless spirit, that brought about the Meetings of Reconciliation between British and Japanese war veterans who had once fought one another on the battlefields of Burma. These Meetings saw the growth of the deepest of friendships, with old adversaries overcoming all manner of difficulties to reach a state of peaceful harmony. It is our greatest pleasure that war veterans who had risked their lives for their countries were now able to forget their differences, even those of religion, and attend Reconciliation Ceremonies at Three Wheels to pray for world peace and true friendship beyond discrimination.

To conclude this Memorial address, I would like to voice our sincere admiration and deepest gratitude to the eternal soul of that great old gentleman, who not only devoted himself to developing Anglo-Japanese relations during his lifetime, but will also doubtless be ever watching over it on our behalf in the future. I would like to

praise the great virtue he showed, establishing deep relationships with Buddhist communities such as ourselves in his quest to bring about true reconciliation.

With Gassho

Chimyo Takehara,
Head Priest of Shogyoji Temple,
and all the other Dharma friends
at the Temple. 27th April 2008.

A TRIBUTE FROM AN OLD FRIEND.

Please understand that I shall refer to Hirakubo san as ‘Masao’ because that is how I have known him and I think he was happy with that.

Shortly after we met in 1984, he told me that he could not understand why he had been allowed to escape death on so many occasions during the War, when so many of his comrades had perished. He firmly believed that his survival was at the cost of those comrades and he vowed always to remember them. Although he was born into a family which practised Shin Buddhism, he felt the need to look elsewhere for an acceptable answer. This resulted in his becoming a practising Roman Catholic. However, he continued to respect the views of those of other religions and his regular attendance at this Temple was evidence that he was still, at heart, a Buddhist.

It was several months after the end of the War before Masao returned to Japan, only to find his family home in ruins. He took with him the pledge to honour the dead of all nationalities; to rebuild his country and to strive to restore friendship with Japan’s recent enemies. He set about the task with tremendous energy.

His insistence on what he called ‘Joint Memorials’ resulted in Services at Westminster, Coventry and Canterbury.

He bravely approached many of the British Regiments, against whom he had fought, to lay the foundations of reconciliation. Not being, at that time, fully aware of the treatment of those of the Allied Forces who were taken prisoner, he was not prepared for the negative response which greeted him. However, being Masao Hirakubo, he persevered and eventually was able to arrange for a party of Japanese ex-Officers to be received at the Headquarters of the British 2nd Division in York. Together with Gwilym Davies, an ex-Corporal in the Royal Welch Fusiliers, he was instrumental in forming the Burma Campaign Fellowship Group. Several group visits by Veterans to Japan and the UK followed, during which many lasting friendships were formed.

I was privileged to accompany Masao to York on the occasion of an annual Kohima Reunion, attended by British Veterans, many of whom could still only remember the Japanese as brutal enemies. He was invited to speak at the dinner and, more significantly, to lay a wreath at the Kohima Memorial. We both shared contented memories of that event

Surprisingly, the friendship between Masao and myself started immediately we met for tea at my house. He stayed for dinner! He became a regular visitor for tea and we had many discussions about the War and its background. His fierce loyalty to his country ensured that we disagreed on many occasions, but my wife, Jean, intervened with the offer of another cup of tea and his favourite fruit cake when he threatened to leave, saying “You British are so..... British.” I am not sure whether he realised that I took that as a compliment. Our friendship was strong enough to withstand such pressures.

When he confided in me that his Consultant had warned him that his heart was liable to let him down at any

time, he accepted it as inevitable. In his typical belief in accuracy, he was almost annoyed when he felt he had exceeded his allotted time.

Masao was an exceptional gentleman. As an example to all peace-loving people, he will long be remembered.

As to Jean and myself, we have lost a good friend.

Maurice Franses
Three Wheels 27th April 2008.

MASAO REMEMBERED.

I met Masao for the first time in 1992, when he interviewed me in a very business-like way at Marubeni-Komarsu, Redditch, a Company that he had established, to see whether I was suitable to join the second Burma Campaign Fellowship Group visit to Japan. One of his co-directors, whom he had appointed and who had been with the Company from the outset for twenty-three years, told me what a wonderful man Masao had been to work with.

He was also head of another Japanese Company, Koyo Bearings, in Leeds. During my last working years I was responsible for the affairs of five national Trade Associations, including that of the Ball and Roller Bearing Manufacturers. The Japanese bearing manufacturers were far more efficient than the British and much of my time was devoted to defending the industry against Japanese imports. After we had lost some twenty-five thousand jobs in Europe to this competition, we were successful in having extra import duties on a European basis imposed on Japanese bearings, including Koyo Bearings, on the grounds that they were being sold below the cost of production. When we came to know each other, Masao vehemently denied that this was true.

I look back on some fifteen years of wonderful friendship during which, thanks to him, great progress was made in reconciliation between those of us who had fought each other so savagely in Burma. Masao was a man of the highest principles, who fearlessly spoke his mind. While almost all of us, who had fought against the Japanese or been taken prisoner by them, thought that the dropping of the two atomic bombs saved countless lives, he believed it was a crime against humanity. He thought that all Japanese were ultimately related to the Royal family, and he was granted private interviews with the Emperor on each of his visits.

When our Services of Reconciliation began at Coventry Cathedral, he appeared in the Great Lectern in a discussion with the Dean. In another Service at Westminster Abbey, he laid a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior. He also laid wreaths during the annual Services at Canterbury Cathedral. In 2004, to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the great Battle of Kohima, which was the turning point of the war in Burma, and in which he took part, he laid a wreath on the Indian Divisions Memorial at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, where the Japanese flag was flown for the day. He was also a guest at 2nd Division's Annual reunions at York Minster, where laid a wreath, and at Burma Night at Sandhurst.

In 1997, we were part of a joint British and Japanese veterans' party to return to Burma. We walked over some of our old battlefields in peace. On the last night in Bangkok, after singing 'Home Sweet Home' together in English and Japanese, the Japanese departed. We were then surprised and deeply moved when the Thai waitresses got together and sang 'Home Sweet Home' in Thai for us. It was typical of the countless heart-warming experiences which, thanks to Masao, we have had in coming to know our former foes as great friends. As Gwilym Davies, who was the first Burma veteran to accompany Masao to Japan used to say, we do not want to die with hatred in our hearts.

Masao was ever conscious of the sufferings of our prisoners of war. When I sensed that we might shortly be

successful in our campaign to get the survivors and widows a special gratuity, Masao came with me to meet the Ambassador to see if there was any hope of obtaining a contribution from the Japanese. He helped prisoners of war wherever he could, in this country and in Japan and Burma.

Always deeply aware of the destruction the war had caused in Burma and of the need to help the Burmese people, he was involved in the building of the new Roman Catholic Cathedral in Kohima, as well as in other projects.

No one has done more for reconciliation between British and Japanese veterans of the Second World War. His inspiration enriched our lives. He died peacefully at eighty-eight after a lifetime of service, which we hope gave him infinite satisfaction in the knowledge that he had lived to great purpose.

Philip Malins

**MEMORIAL SERVICE
AND PRAYERS FOR WORLD PEACE
AT THREE WHEELS.
Saturday, 16th August 2008.**

With the advancing age of the surviving veterans of the Burma Campaign and the death of so many old comrades, the emphasis in this year's Ceremony was slightly changed. Although the traditional shaking of hands among all those present was continued, the death of Masao Hirakubo, and the fact that it was no longer possible for any of the surviving veterans in Japan to make the long journey to attend, meant that there could not now be the meeting, symbolic of Reconciliation, between Japanese and British soldiers who had fought against each other in the war. As a result, the annual Ceremonies will continue in future to focus on a Memorial Service for all those who died in Burma, together with Prayers for World Peace.



The Memorial Service at Three Wheels

A more informal Memorial Service for Masao Hirakubo, who died peacefully on 4th March 2008, was held at the Eza, or Gathering, at Three Wheels on 27th April and some of the personal tributes which were read out on that occasion are included in this Issue of the *Newsletter*.

On this later, more formal occasion many distinguished guests were present, among them Minister Koji Tomita from the Japanese Embassy, who opened proceedings by paying a first tribute to Masao Hirakubo. After the conclusion of the Religious Ceremony, conducted by the Reverend Professor Kemmyo Taira Sato, a formal Memorial Address from the Venerable Chimyo Takehara, the Head Priest of Shogyoji Temple, and a long and touching letter from Satoru Yanagi, were read out.

The many heartfelt verbal tributes, which followed, included those by Thomas Bruin and Philip Malins, the two Burma veterans who were present, and among the many others who spoke were Akiko Macdonald, Secretary and Chairperson of BCS, the Venerable Ganshin Rock, a Tendai Priest, the Venerable Nyanarato who, with his two companion Theravadan monks, concluded the meeting by chanting in Pali, Professor Ryugo Matsui, a member of BCS, Professor Toshikazu Arai, a Shin Buddhist Priest, Mrs. Momoko Williams of The Japanese Residents Association, John White and Mr. David Charles, an Obituary for whose father is printed in this Issue.

John White

INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP AND RECONCILIATION SUNDAY, CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL.

17th August 2008

John Bynoe, who had arranged this annual Service from its inception, died in November 2007. It was his wish, and the wish of The Very Reverend Robert Willis, Dean of Canterbury, that the Services should be perpetuated on an annual basis. Christopher Chalk, John's grandson, and Phillida Purvis, were responsible for making the arrangements this year in accordance with John's wishes.

The Service, attended by members both of the International Friendship and Reconciliation Trust and of the Burma Campaign Society, including Mrs. Elisabeth Bynoe, formed part of Evensong, some four hundred people, including members of the general public, being present. The Japanese Ambassador, His Excellency Shin Ebihara, with members of the Embassy staff, and the German Military Attaché, Captain Uwe Hovorka, with Lady Pender, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Kent, and the Sheriff of Canterbury were among those attending.

The Service opened with the placing of the Royal British Legion Standard on the High Altar and the choir singing Malcolm Arnold's *In war resolution..... In peace goodwill*, followed by the Vice-Dean affirming that "mutual reconciliation and understanding are the only way to world peace and concord." Christopher Chalk gave the exhortation "We will remember them" and ninety-three year old, Far East Prisoner of War, Bill Rose, recited words by Laurens van der Post, also a prisoner of the Japanese, calling for understanding and forgiveness. Philip Malins, Burma Campaign veteran, read the First Lesson from Isaiah 2, "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Finally, John Chiles, also a Burma Campaign veteran, recited the Kohima Epitaph "When you go home tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow we gave our today."

The Reverend Kemmyo Taira Sato, Priest in Charge of Three Wheels, and The Reverend Toshikazu Arai, from Nishi-Honganji, Japan, in their Buddhist robes, formed part of the procession of Clergy.

With hymns, prayers and the anthem, it was a deeply moving occasion, especially to visitors from overseas. I am sure John Bynoe would have been pleased.

Philip Malins

OBITUARY.
STANLEY CHARLES CBE.

I did not know Stanley until 1991 when I telephoned him about joining the Burma Campaign Fellowship Group of which he was Honorary Secretary. We had an enthralling conversation lasting some two hours.

During the Second World War he was a Captain in the Intelligence Corps. When the Japanese came into the war, there was an acute shortage of Japanese speakers. Personnel with a high IQ, already in the Forces, and the brightest boys straight from school were put through crash courses in Japanese at the School of Oriental and African Studies. These included studies in interrogation and translation.. After completing his language training, Stanley was posted to No. 2 Mobile Section with 4 Corps Headquarters in Burma, where he was engaged in interrogating prisoners and translating documents.

It was a savage war in which the Japanese fought to the death, rarely allowing themselves to be taken prisoner, some 60% of them dying in Burma. Allied personnel who had fought the Japanese, or were taken prisoner, 25% of them dying in captivity, developed a lifelong hatred of the Japanese.

Against this background, a small group of front line soldiers and aircrew, which included a high proportion who had been decorated for gallantry, formed the Burma Campaign Fellowship Group, in which Stanley played an outstanding part, in order to seek reconciliation with their former enemies

Parties of British veterans visited Japan, where they were wonderfully treated by members of the All Burma Veterans Association of Japan, groups of whom visited Britain, where they were equally warmly welcomed by members of the Fellowship Group. During these visits, Stanley delighted in showing Japanese veterans round Balliol, his old Oxford College.



Stanley Charles with Beti, his wife

They all recognised that hatred should not be passed on from generation to generation and that the final victory for both sides is reconciliation. They realised that after the First World War there had been no reconciliation, resulting, only twenty-one years later, in World War Two. Lifelong friendships were formed between men who would have killed each other in Burma. We survivors give thanks that sixty-three years of freedom from world war, and the prospect that there will never be another, have been the reward for all the sacrifice. We are glad that succeeding generations of British and Japanese have become friends and that Japanese Companies are so welcome in this country.

Today, on behalf of his many friends, British and Japanese, living and dead, I thank Stanley for all that he did in helping to bring us together and enriching our lives — a true man of peace. We will remember him to the end of our days with gratitude, affection and admiration for all that he meant to us.

Philip Malins
2nd May 2008

GOSHIN BATA, A SOLDIER'S FLAG.

In the course of a lifetime there can be an infinite variety of experiences, and this is surely true for those of us who spent some years of our youth at war. When, in 1945, I found a Goshin Bata, a Japanese Soldier's Flag, on an abandoned bullock-cart at a roadblock in Burma, I could not have imagined the very different circumstances in which I would part with it.

For fifty years, I looked after the flag, but in November 1995, when I was privileged to to be one of a party of British veterans of the Burma Campaign, which visited Japan as guests of Japanese veterans, I thought it was time it was returned home, so I took it with me. Over the years, I had thought about the Japanese soldier and wondered about the circumstances in which the flag had come to be on that bullock-cart.

The Goshin Bata was held aloft on the platform of the Kudan Hall in Tokyo, where we were introduced, and an announcement was made about it. A day or so later a story appeared in a newspaper, the Shimotsuke, with a photo of it and an explanation of its homecoming. The article included the telephone number of Mr. Yoshiji Minakawa, who had undertaken the difficult task of trying to to trace the original owner of the flag or his bereaved relatives.

Many telephone calls were received, but none of them helped to identify the owner. Although there were over a hundred signatures on the flag, it did not give his name. It did, however, include the name of a village, Kami Mikawacho, with which Yoshiji Manakawa got in touch. Unfortunately, many of those who had signed it had moved away from the district or died so that, despite his best efforts, it was impossible to trace any relative of the soldier.



Thomas Bruin with the Goshin Bata

Since a Goshin Bata was such a treasured possession and reminder of family and friends, he would not readily have been parted from it, and it was concluded that he had almost certainly died in Burma.

With the help of a young Japanese businessman, Yasunori Matsuda, who lived not far from my home, I was able to correspond with Yoshiji Minakawa, who is, I discovered, mentioned in General Lyall Grant's book, *Burma: The Turning Point*. He served with the famous 214 Regiment, of 33 Division, The White Tigers. In May 1944, he took part in an attack on an area of Bishenpur which contained the rear administrative cadres of forward units, together with supplies, vehicles and mule lines. Casualties in the battle, which lasted two or three days, were heavy, and over three hundred and eighty mules were killed. Yoshiji Minakawa was wounded in both legs, but survived by being carried to the safety of the hills above the village.

At the time, I was serving with a Company of the Baluch Regiment of the Indian Army which, with troops of the Northants Regiment, was holding a vital position in the hills above Bishenpur. On our way back to our Battalion, which we had been ordered to rejoin on the plain below, we came onto the scene of devastation in the village and took part in the closing stages of the battle.

Several months after meeting Yoshiji Minakawa on the last night of our visit to Japan in 1995, I had the pleasure of seeing him again in London. He had arrived with some other Japanese gentlemen on a tour of Europe and took the trouble to come out to our home in London, where, with the help of Yasunori Matsuda, who acted as interpreter, my wife and I entertained him.

It was a happy occasion and a far cry from the carnage of Bishenpur. Later, the thought that was uppermost in my mind was that we had been brought together by the flag of an unknown Japanese soldier who had very probably met his death in Burma.

Tom Bruin

Editor's Note.

A Goshin Bata was a flag which was given to soldiers who were going to the front and was believed to work as a talisman against injury or death. It was usually a gift from his relatives and closest friends.

In spite of the lapse of half a century, Yoshiji Minakawa did indeed manage to make contact with twenty people who remembered signing the flag. It is an ironic comment on the frailty of human memory and the nature of wars that none of them could recall the name of the soldier to whom it had been presented, and who had seemingly died on their behalf.

KAMIKAZE.

Editor's Note.

I make no apology for printing in this Issue an article which I requested from Dr. Komatsu. Although it is not concerned with the Burma Campaign, I believe it has a great deal to do with reconciliation, which is one of the main aims of BCS. The avoidance of stereotypes in international relations is essential and yet, in spite of having visited the Kamikaze Museum in Chiran, I myself shared the one which Dr. Komatsu, the author of "Origins of the Pacific War and the Importance of "Magic", seeks to combat.

Towards the Elimination of a Stereotype.

The more time I spent researching the Japanese, British and American diplomatic and military primary sources, while at Oxford studying for my Doctorate, the clearer became to me the extent to which the interests of these three countries coincided, and that it was as a result of preconceived perceptions and misunderstandings that they convinced themselves that they were not reconcilable.



Keiishiro Komatsu

The stereotypical image of 'Kamikase' or 'Divine Wind', shared by post-war British, Americans and Japanese, was firstly that it was suicidal; secondly that it represented ultra-nationalist ideological extremism; thirdly that it was State Shintoist and fourthly that it involved brainwashed teenagers. Some of you may be surprised to see the inclusion of post-war Japanese, but the Japanese of all generations, like the rest of the world, have been strongly influenced by the way in which Kamikaze pilots became legends.

The question arises, to what extent were Japan and the Kamikaze pilots unique?

I myself was surprised when I very recently discovered a number of things. Firstly, Kamikaze pilots were given parachutes. Secondly, their operations were rational and pragmatic to the extent that they were given enough fuel for a return to base. Thirdly, those who volunteered included Catholics, some of them carrying their Bibles with them, as well as socialists, liberals and many others. They were not a homogeneous ideological group, but came from all walks of life. Fourthly, and finally, their ages ranged from the high 'teens to the over fifties. Many were bright-minded, highly educated personnel from prestigious Universities such as Tokyo. Many, indeed, wrote letters to their families and friends quoting from Western poets and philosophers, and were outstanding thinkers who had thought through different options and what the war was about.

One of their instructions, just before take-off, was as follows.

"Release your bomb just before yourself almost crashing into the target. In fact, the bomb is more effective

in shooting through the target on its own, rather than your plane crashing into the target with the bomb. If you are confident to bomb the target from a distance, do so, and leave the combat zone to come back to this home base, If unfortunately you meet enemy fighter planes before finding the targets, unload your bomb to do your best dog-fighting, and come back to this base. We trust that all of you understand the purpose of your mission. It is not to die; it is to achieve the best military result. Come back again and again. We will let you take off again and again.

(Captain Motoharu Okamura)

To give an example, Petty Officer Second Class Setsuo Ishino was recently identified as the pilot who crashed into the US Battleship Missouri on 11th April 1945. Research shows that 16 Naval Zero Fighters, in 4 Flights, took off that day from his home base, together with others from various bases in Southern Japan. In his Flight, three out of four, including Ishino himself, had been on previous Kamikaze missions. Eleven of his group had been shot down or crashed into their targets, whilst 3 had returned to base by the time Ishino and Petty Officer Second Class Kenkichi Ishii spotted the Missouri.

They all knew that the mission was very dangerous and the risk of dying extremely great. But, as Lieutenant Yukio Seki, known as the 'first Kamikaze', replied, when asked by a colleague if he really wanted to do this, "I am going for my wife's sake and family's sake, for no one else. Do not worry, I am alright." Protecting the country was not the end, it was the means to meet the end.

The fact is that, depending on the Flight, and for various reasons such as engine failure, failing to find targets and surviving through bombing operations and dog-fights, 40-60% of Kamikaze pilots survived to the end of the Pacific War.

Until very lately, conventional wisdom had it that Kamikaze was mostly a waste of lives, achieving little military result, but records recently released by the US authorities suggest otherwise. In terms of purely military impact, Kamikaze, as a way of fighting, could be seen as being rather effective. While around 2,500 Kamikaze pilots were killed, their opponents lost about 7,000 personnel, together with several tens of thousands who were injured, while against the Japanese planes destroyed must be set those lost by their opponents, together with the considerable number of warships, including aircraft carriers, that were sunk or put out of commission..

A Lieutenant Commander of the US Navy, a member of the Occupation Authorities over Japan, said to one of the Zero Fighter flying aces, Kazuo Sugino who had himself twice joined Kamikaze flights, when they met after the end of the war. "We realized that if we forget the Japanese spirit symbolized by Kamikaze, our Occupation Policy is not going to work. That is why it became a moderate occupation policy." This comment reminds us of what Lieutenant Iwao Usubuchi of the Japanese Navy said to his colleagues immediately before his death near the end of the war. "We will die in grace leading the way to Japan's rebirth. Wouldn't it be the desire of our hearts.?"

Again, the Kamikaze pilots were, in many ways, not so different from their counterparts in the West, such as the 5,000 American B 17 daylight bomber aircrew who died, often having to fly without fighter escorts, or the 50,000 British night bomber aircrew who were killed. They all knew that their chances of survival were extremely slim, only a very small proportion of them surviving a full tour of duty.

The greatest tragedy is not just the human and material costs of the Pacific War, but the fact that both sides failed to recognise the extent to which their opponents were similar to themselves and to which they were the victims of preconceived misconceptions and misunderstandings based on the belief that the other side was monstrous. Reconciliation starts from recognising this fact as a step towards preventing such things recurring.

Keiichiro Komatsu

THE POST-WAR RECOVERY OF JAPAN AND ITS FUTURE IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

At a **Discussion Meeting** at the Nippon Club on 20th March 2008, using a continuous series of excellent slides, **Dr. Keiichiro Komatsu**, an economist and Chief London Representative of the Development Bank of Japan, covered this vast subject outstandingly well in the short time available. A prior One Minute Silence was held in memory of Masao Hirakubo, the Chairman of BCS, who had died two weeks earlier.

Before World War Two, Japan was a unique society with, historically, a pro-Western society. The Western perception of Japan, on the other hand, was of extremism, and there was an invisible barrier to understanding of the country. He referred to the casualty figures of British prisoners of war held by the Japanese and the adverse effect on immediate post-war Anglo-Japanese relations

Japan inherited reasonably high post-war educational standards. Very high savings and investment followed the war and there was effective Government promotion at national level to enable selected industries to become competitive on a world scale. A high proportion of the workforce was switched from primary production to higher value products involving greater technical expertise and skills, with an emphasis on quality and reliability, to sell in world markets.

From 1949, the powerful Ministry of International Trade and Industry formulated and implemented policy in these areas. Until the mid nineteen-sixties, it exercised complete control over imports and exports and allocated funds and resources to those sectors considered vital for industrial growth.

The Korean War of 1950-53 caused a high demand for war supplies and equipment on the part of the United States, which boosted Japanese industry. For a decade from 1960, gross national product grew annually by some 10% compound, and it is often said that Japan's take-off coincided with the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

In 1973 and 1979 came the first oil crises and these had severe effects in Japan, which was almost totally dependent on foreign oil supplies. The Bubble Economy of 1989-91, with sky high property prices, burst in 1992, and the next decade was one of comparative stagnation. Japan had, by 1979, become the first non-white society to catch up with the West and was ahead of it in some technologies, such as 'just in time' control of inventories. The rise of Brazil, Russia, India and China could, however, face Japan, which was almost completely dependent on imported raw materials, with increasing challenges. Japan also had problems with water, food and other resources, needed to support the economy, which were likely to intensify.

Dr. Komatsu also spoke of the damage sustained in World War Two in which 1.43 million soldiers, 430,000 aircrew and 1.86 million civilians were killed or missing in action. By the end of the war 80% of Japanese shipping had been lost; 34% of all industrial areas were damaged, and 24% of all buildings destroyed. He believed that a total of 25-30% of all national assets had been lost, compared with about 24% in Britain. One feels that the recovery and success of Japan on such a scale after the war is probably unprecedented in world history.

Philip Malins

THE FUTURE OF THE BURMA CAMPAIGN SOCIETY.

Since becoming actively involved in 2006, being appointed Honorary Secretary in 2007, and then Chairperson, I have received many e-mails, letters and phone calls, a surprising number of them from younger people in both countries, expressing concern at the possibility that BCS might be closed down, and it is very difficult for me to ignore their wishes. Four main points were raised.

1. It was very significant that reconciliation had been achieved amongst ordinary people without help from either government.

2. We can now think about war itself, and we have a responsibility to pass on the experiences of the veterans of World War Two to later generations.
3. We should maintain the legacy of Masao Hirakubo's grand activities, not only in giving speeches in the UK, but also in travelling each year to Tokyo, Kanagawa, Chiba, Nagoya, Osaka, Kyoto, Yamanashi, Okayama and the Islands of Shikoku and Kyushu, and pass on the war stories from both sides to more of those who are interested,
4. Japanese people's observations of the War are different, and they would like discussion to continue in order to achieve greater understanding of what happened.

I would therefore like to propose that;

1. In the future we should hold one or two events in the form of small Discussion Meetings or a big International Forum to appeal to public interests,
2. We should also hold Committee Meetings to organize the events and exchange information about individual activities and recruit more people, asking for their help in sustaining the Society and its activities.
3. We should keep records of war memories, such as Masao Hirakubo's documents, letters, CDs and Videos, as well as those of others who were involved in the Burma Campaign. These should be in Computer Files or on CDs so that many, all over the world, can share the information.
4. We should endeavour to seek financial support and keep these original documents in a safe place, as was Masao Hirakubo's wish.

If we could find an Investor or numbers of Contributors to help financially, we could sustain BCS on a more organised basis and we have discussed the possibility of applying to become a recognised Charitable Organisation. I am, in addition, delighted to welcome David Stanley, son of the late Charles Stanley, and Jeffrey Bateman, who both attended the AGM and are interested in helping as time allows.

Activities in 2008-2009.

1. To hold one or two Committee Meetings, reshuffling and adding members in order to implement the BCS plan.
2. To hold, some time in the Spring, as was suggested at the AGM, a Formal Tribute to Masao, together with a Celebration of the One hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Anglo-Japanese Commerce and Friendship Treaty.
3. Professor Matsui, who will be coming in April to stay for about a year, has offered to help in computerising all the documents left by Masao.
4. We shall find suitable personnel to maintain and update the BCS Website and the BCS Newsletter will continue to be produced.

Finally, I want to thank Pauline Martin for all her hard work as Honorary Treasurer over the years and for agreeing to stay on until next year, and also Philip Malins, who gave a wonderful farewell and a memorable speech at Masao's Funeral Service at Mortlake Crematorium on April 13th this year, for all his continued kindness, help and advice.

Akiko Macdonald.

Editor's Note.

For comments, criticisms, and questions concerning the Newsletter, please contact John Wliite, 25 Cadogan Place, London, SW1X 9SA, Tel/Fax 020 7235 4034. Material for inclusion in the March 2009 Issue should reach me at the above address by 28th February at the latest.

Edited and produced by John White and Lucien Chocron

THE BURMA CAMPAIGN SOCIETY
22 B WORTHING ROAD LAINDON, BASILDON
ESSEX SS15 6AL
TEL/FAX: 01268 412 803

E-MAIL: info@burmacampaignsociety.org / akiko.akomac5@gmail.com

WEB: www.burmacampaignsociety.org