

# FAIRTRADE FILMS NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2012



*Co-director Bety Reis discusses the rough cut of A Guerra da Beatriz with the Prime Minister of Timor Leste, Xanana Gusmao.*

Bety and the Dili Film Works team were recently invited to the Gusmao residence to screen *Beatriz's War*. Xanana was moved by the film and by the love story between Beatriz and Tomas, spanning 24 years, the length of the Indonesian occupation of his country. He pointed out that not all the historical facts were correct, but that the film is called *Beatriz's War*. The story symbolizes the life women lived under occupation: their struggles, fears, loves, and strengths. Dramatic license is necessary to tell this story in a coherent way.

Xanana appears in the film in a stunning archive sequence showing his return to Timor after nine years in an Indonesian jail. The footage is electrifying, passionate, and gives voice to the emotion felt by the Timorese people in the months after winning independence. Xanana led the resistance for many years before he was captured, and continued in this role from his Jakarta prison cell.

The film also includes military actions which Xanana Gusmao organised against the Indonesian military. He initiated the events leading up to the 1983 Kraras massacre. Xanana was determined that the world know that the resistance was still alive, contrary to Indonesian propaganda, and organised a nation wide insurrection. Beatriz, the lead character in the film, played a major role in leading the uprising in Kraras.

Visit the facebook page for *A Guerra Da Beatriz*

[www.facebook.com/A.Guerra.Da.Beatriz](http://www.facebook.com/A.Guerra.Da.Beatriz)

Timor Leste's first feature film *A Guerra da Beatriz* completes filming

## *A Guerra da Beatriz*

Tragically, the Indonesian military executed most of the males in the village: men and boys, in retaliation for the attack and for the defection to the resistance of Timorese troops under Indonesian command.

The Prime Minister was very taken by the talent in the film. Irim Tolentino shines as Beatriz, the beautiful, uncompromising heroine of the film. Her performance is world class and is an extraordinary achievement by an actor who has never worked on a film previously. Augusta Soares also impressed the Prime Minister. She turned twenty-one during the shoot and put in a great performance as Beatriz's sister-in-law. The rivalry between the two women charges the film but their relationship also gives us the film's poignant and moving ending.

Gaspar Sarmiento, a non actor, who stepped into the role of the Indonesian Commander Sumitro at the last moment gives a classic portrayal of evil tempered by a disquieting buffoonery. Xanana described Commander Sumitro as a symbol, as representative of many Indonesian officers, and was impressed by his authoritative performance.

It was a rare privilege to screen the film to the nation's leader, an opportunity few filmmakers would have, and to receive such a positive response from a man who played a major role in the liberation of Timor Leste.

Photo - from left to right: Kirsty Sword Gusmao, Xanana Gusmao, Bety Reis, and producer Stella Zammataro.



# Kraras

## The grief in recreating a massacre

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Directors Luigi Acquisto & Bety Reis breakdown whilst filming the Kraras massacre.

Bety Reis, director, comforts Irim Tolentino



Gaspar Sarmiento as Commander Sumitro

# FILMING A MASSACRE & LOVE LOST

The recreation and filming of the massacre at the village of Kraras was a profound experience for the cast and crew.

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The massacre is a small part of the film but is critical to the central love story between Beatriz and Tomas. It is the event that leads to Tomas' disappearance, that changes Beatriz's life forever.

The filmmakers decided to film in Kraras for many reasons. The landscape around the village, particularly the beautiful wide, black sand river bed, sits incongruously with the horrors that occurred thirty years ago. This incongruity adds a special dimension to the film, showing the healing powers of the landscape, a rejuvenation that complements the spirit of the Timorese, but in this film, also underlines Beatriz's weakness; her refusal to let go of the past, to put the horrors of occupation, and her husband's death, behind her, and move forward. She holds on desperately to the belief that Tomas is alive.

Many of the extras that worked on the film were from Kraras and advised on how events unfolded, including describing the massacre. One important detail emerged the day before filming. A survivor told the directors, Bety Reis and Luigi Acquisto, that the Indonesians made the Timorese sing Foho Ramelau before they were shot. This reason for this strange detail was that the Indonesians could not execute hundreds of innocent men and boys. They needed a reason. Foho Ramelau was the anthem of the resistance. It was banned. It was enough to open fire. Over two hundred were killed at Kraras that day, but in the months that followed thousands were killed around Kraras and Viqueque.

The moment of filming the massacre brought back many memories for the men acting as extras. Three had survived the killing by feigning death and remaining motionless, buried under a pile of bodies. Others escaped prior to the arrests, and many had fathers, sons, or brothers who were murdered. All insisted on playing their part in the recreation. As the cameras started rolling the men started to weep. The sight of a young man holding his baby was heartbreaking, a telling detail of how incomprehensible the killings were. There was silence and Luigi Acquisto turned to Bety Reis to see why she hadn't called action. She was in tears. Acquisto called action but actor Gaspar Sarmento, playing an Indonesian commander, was unable to continue. He was part of the Timorese clandestine movement, his family is from the district of Viqueque and he also broke down. There was nothing cathartic for any of the people from Kraras that day, or for the cast and crew. It was a draining and distressing experience. Yet the faces of the women who had lived through 1983, still proud and defiant, was awe inspiring. It gave us the strength to continue.





## CROWD SOURCING CAMPAIGN REACHES TARGET!

The latest crowd sourcing campaign to finance *A Guerra Da Beatriz* reached its target of \$12,000 by the end of October. This will enable the filmmakers to complete a fine cut and prepare for the final stages of post-production, the sound mix, music composition, and picture grade.

This is the second crowd sourcing campaign for *Beatriz's War* and the public's response, both in East Timor and Australia, has made a significant contribution to the making of the film.

Dili Film Works and FairTrade Films would like to thank everyone who generously contributed to the campaign. You will all be included in the film's credits and on the website, as well as receiving other benefits, including a DVD of the completed film.

*Beatriz's War* is scheduled to be completed by May 2013. Further finance is needed for this to happen and another crowd sourcing campaign will start in January.

If you'd like to join the *Beatriz* Fan Club or sponsor the film, please visit the FairTrade Films website [www.fairtradefilms.com.au](http://www.fairtradefilms.com.au)

This will be our last newsletter for the year. We wish you all the best for the festive season.