Def Doc #1523

IMTFE

United States of America et al

—vs.—

Araki Sadao et al

SWORN DEPOSITION

Deponent : SAWADA, Shigeru

Having first duly sworn an oath as on attached sheet and in accordance with the procedure followed in my country I hereby depose as follows.

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~~(Party of Comm.)~~

Circumstances of the Occupation of North French Indo-China by Japanese Forces

1. From October 1939 to November 1940 I served as Vice Chief of the General Staff under Imperial Prince KANIN, the then Chief of the General Staff.

2 Early settlement of the China Incident was the policy Japan adhered to consistently. After the operations in China began to show a tendency for protraction, I went, with the permission of the Chief and the approval of the War Minister, to Hongkong where I held a secret liaison conference

for peace among the military representatives of Japan and China. This conference however ended in vain, and in consequence it became urgently necessary for us to cut off Chungking from North French Indo-China and the Burma ~~Route~~ Road, both of which were the most important supply routes for Chungking. For this purpose the Japanese Government opened negotiations with the Vichy Régime and the British Government. As a result of these negotiations it was decided that the above ~~routes~~ Road should be closed voluntarily, and in June 1940 ~~China's concerned~~ a special committee headed by Maj. Gen. NISHIHARA was dispatched to French Indo-China in order

to inspect the conditions at the border.

3. After the closing of the French Indo-China Route, the Chungking government steadily gathered its forces along the border of French Indo-China, and it was feared they might enter the French territory. These circumstances led Japan to dispatch forces to North French Indo-China for the defense of that area. As a result of ~~x~~ negotiations between Tokyo and Vichy, an agreement was reached in August 1940 between Foreign Minister MATSUOKA and Ambassador ~~Henri~~ HENRI for the dispatch of Japanese forces to North French Indo-China.

The details of the matter were left to agreements to be reached at Hanoi between the military representatives of Japan and French Indo-China.

4). The negotiations in Hanoi encountered ~~with~~ no little difficulties. By some means, however, on 4 Sept, we succeeded in bringing it to ~~the~~ a point where the agreement was about to be signed. However, ~~verge of signing the agreement.~~ ~~But~~ an unfortunate event broke out on 5 Sept. ~~That is to say~~ The MORIMOTO battalion, on approaching the borders for reconnoissance purposes, was informed by the commander in charge of the French Indo-Chinese border ~~line~~ forces, that they were entering ~~upon~~ Indo-Chinese territory, whereupon the battalion immediately withdrew. However not ~~a fire was heard to be~~ a shot was exchanged between them. According to further investigation, it was reportedly not certain, whether the MORIMOTO battalion had or had not, actually, wandered into their territory.

5). Making an excuse of this ~~contingency~~ occurrence, the French Indo-Chinese authorities stiffened their attitude to claim the over-all denunciation of the agreement ~~in detail~~, which was about to be signed. The Japanese, still desirous of peaceful settlement, resumed further negotiations, but

the French Indo-Chinese authorities ~~but~~ ~~they~~ remained uncompromising and we could hardly reach ~~to~~ a conclusion.

1). At that time the government of French Indo-China had ~~alleged~~ pledged their loyalty to the Vichy Government. Nevertheless we received information to the effect that such was, more or less, dubious. Especially, the attitude on their part to delay, on some pretext or other, the carrying out of some occupation of Northern French Indo-China, which ~~had~~ had already been agreed to by the Vichy Government, raised some suspicion on Imperial Headquarters. This finding it necessary to demonstrate a firmer attitude with regard to the agreement in Hanoi, issued instructions to Maj-Gen NISHIHARA to demand a final answer on the part of the French Indo-Chinese authorities by noon 22 Sept. However the Imperial Headquarters adhered to bringing the agreement to a satisfactory close, and was quite desirous of making a peaceful advance. Should they refuse, we would have to resort to the alternative of occupation by force, and thereupon, orders were given to the ~~1st~~ South China ~~Expeditionary Forces~~ Army to prepare in advance, for any measures of war or peace

The foregoing orders issued by the Imperial Headquarters were to the effect that if an agreement was to be reached, we would make a peaceful advance from Haiphong in accordance with the said agreement; ~~that~~ in case no consent could be obtained by noon 20 Sept, we should commence action at midnight on the 22nd, and make our way by force should their forces offer no resistance. It is reported that this written order has been burnt and no longer exists.

The Chief of the General Staff Headquarters had sent the Chief of Military Operations to direct this action ~~action~~ to be taken by the South China Army and was one ~~Expeditionary Force~~ which required utmost delicacy and prudence in handling.

7. ~~The~~ Noon of September 22 was the very moment to decide on war or peace. French Indo-China maintained an unbending ~~tough~~ attitude. Japan, being eager to keep peace at all costs, gave way at last. Thus the agreement for occupation was finally completed in peace. Therefore the agreement, which was ~~that had been~~ scheduled to be concluded at noon, was actually concluded a few hours past noon.

8 The news of the conclusion of the agreement was immediately dispatched to our South China Army, and the Commander-in-chief of the Army ordered his units ~~corps~~

to set ~~forth for~~ about peaceful occupation. Unfortunately, however, by that time the ~~troops~~ forward units of our forces had commenced actions for free occupation, ~~at the~~ on a report that the agreement had not yet been reached at noon, and was advancing through a mountainous region in dispersed ~~troops~~ order. These ~~troops~~ forward units did not know that the agreement was afterwards reached. Therefore at noon, 23 September, they began to enter French Indo-China, a fact which resulted in the deplorable hostilities ~~at the~~ border.

9. Thanks to an order from Tokyo and to the adequate remedial measures taken by

General ANDO, Commander-in-Chief of the South China Army, before the arrival of that order, the hostilities at the border ceased before entering a serious stage. The Japanese forces returned to French Indo-China all that they ~~got during~~ had obtained the hostilities. Thus the matter was completely settled.

10- According to the agreement, japanese transports might have entered the Port of Haiphong under the guidance of the French Navy, but as a fighting ~~took~~ had taken place on ~~the north of the land, in fact~~ land to the north, an ~~(forced)~~ entry into the Port of Haiphong was considered dangerous ~~and~~, for this reason, a landing was made in safety on the southern coast without provoking any battle. At the time of this landing, a unit of japanese patrol-planes dropped some bombs in the suburbs of the city of Haiphong due to a misunderstanding of signals between the commander and his subordinates. As to this, reparations (was) were made for damages ~~done~~ and the commander was punished.

11- The military strength of Japanese troops in Indochina consisted of

of about 1000 soldiers in all ~~total~~ ~~number~~, if I remember nightly ~~well~~. The Japanese military authorities considered it very dangerous to dispatch alone such a feeble unit to a remote foreign land, but, nevertheless ~~anyhow~~, the Chief of the General Staff, in consideration of a principle of peaceful occupation (penetration), ~~(had to)~~ decided upon the least possible military strength that circumstances would allow ~~as the necessity~~ (required).

12 – The crossing of the frontier ~~boundary~~ by the MORIMOTO Battalion and the (~~an~~) occurrence of fighting on the border ~~boundary~~, were much regretted by the central authorities of Japan, but were nothing but incidental happenings, but from the viewpoint of military discipline, the Commander ~~Chief~~ of the battalion, MORIMOTO, ~~(the)~~ and (~~the~~) his ~~Chief of Regiment~~ this regimental commander were committed for military trial and pu-

wished, and the two Commanders, ~~in~~ namely ~~chief~~ ANDO and KUNO were dismissed, and to divisional Commanders degraded. Moreover, even among the central military authorities, in charge of the Strategic Section who ~~took~~ was in charge of directing the South China Army was transferred.

13 – As above, the entry into the northern part of French Indochina was motivated by the necessity of hastening the settlement of the China Incident and that was the reason why the process of entry had been all the time ~~&~~ ~~in~~ accompanied ~~bad~~ ~~with~~ by peaceful intentions. That is, the Commission's ~~(control)~~ inspection was first conducted ~~(exercised)~~ and the entry itself was put into practice ~~after~~ ~~due to~~ as a result of concessions made on the part of Japan after reiterated negotiations had been made for more than two months with French Indochina, a country very not so strong at that time. It was quite natural there-

fore that there was employed only the least possible military strength as the agreement allowed, and, this, to manifest simply our peaceful intentions. In such a manner, the Japanese side tried to express their ~~sincerity~~ sincere desire wholeheartedly for peaceful friendship.

Def Doc No.

On this 14th day of August, 1947

At Tokyo

DEPONENT SAWADA, Shigeru (seal)

I, [redacted] hereby certify that the above statement was sworn by the Deponet, who affixed his signature and seal thereto in the presence of this witness.

On the same date

At Tokyo

Witness: (signed) KIYOSE, Ichiro (seal)

OATH:

In accordance with my conscience I swear to tell the whole truth withholding nothing and adding nothing.

SAWADA, Shigeru (seal)

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