

Def. Doc. No. 1928

Translated by
Defense Language Branch

INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL FOR THE FAR EAST

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, et al

-vs-

ARAKI, Sadao, et al

SWORN DEPOSITION (Translation)

Deponent: YOSHIDA Gompachi

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.

My name is YOSHIDA, Gompachi. I was formerly in service as Major General. I was born on January 18, 1894, and now live at No. 55, 5 chome, Noborito, Chiba-shi, Chiba Pref. In December 1915, I entered the Military Academy. After graduating from the Academy, I occupied various posts. I was appointed Commander of the Rangoon Air Defense forces in August 1943, and late in September 1945 Chief of Staff of the 15th Army where I remained until the end of the war.

2. General KIMURA, Heitaro, came to the City of Rangoon to assume his office on September 12, 1944. The next day in the compounds of the Headquarters of the Burma Area Army, General KIMURA delivered an address to men and officers of the whole

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Army I being present. In his address he told us emphatically to encourage military discipline and morale, to apply due and prompt punishment and rewards, to promote friendship and good understanding between the two peoples, and to win the public favor. In obedience to the General's address and for the purpose of having my men well informed of his instructions, first of all I held an inspection of troops under my command. I also organized such various units specializing in specific tasks as follows: units to treat and rescue the Burmese people killed or injured in air raids; fire service units; and units for delivery of necessary medical articles.

At the time when I was appointed Chief of Staff of the 15th Army, the Army was in retreat toward the banks of the Irrawaddy following the failure of our Impahl operations. In his interview with me on my departure for my new post, General KIMURA instructed me in detail to the same effect as was stated in the General's first address following his arrival. Besides, he gave me strict orders to avoid taking to scorched-earth tactics on our way of retreat and thus to keep the native populace out of the horrors of war; and especially to afford every possible facility to those government officials and civilians who wished to evacuate with the Japanese forces. On my arrival at the Headquarters of the 15th Area Army, I found telegraphic orders from General KIMURA to the above

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effect. Upon my assumption of post, I thought it was of initial urgency to make it thoroughly known to the whole Army of the intention of General KIMURA. The review of military discipline in our Army was carried out by the Commander of the 15th Army KATAMURA and myself, with a view to thoroughly informing the soldiers of the intention of the Area Army Commander. At that time, Commander KATAMURA took charge of the review of the major units directly attached to him, and I, in his place, took charge of the minor. The commanders of army corps under the 15th Army likewise executed review on their sub-units. In those days the 31st and the 33rd Divisions were retreating with extreme difficulty, but despite the situation, Commanders of both Divisions took pains to carry out the inspection of troops with regards to military discipline on the battlefield and applied due and prompt punishment to unit commanders for neglect of taking good care of arms. As regards our relations with the Burmese people, the scorched earth tactics was, of course, prohibited and appropriate facilities for retreat were afforded to official and civilian evacuees. It was also ordered to avoid setting billets and any army camps in residential districts. In this way the forces at the front put up with all inconveniences to keep the people from suffering from the ill effects of war. Also after that, at the time of evacuation from Maymyo (about

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30 kilometers north-east of Mandalay) a special order was issued to ban the scorched earth tactics.

3. General KIMURA, who was very eager to promote good understanding and cooperation between the Japanese and Burmese, distributed among his forces a pamphlet in two volumes entitled "The Attitude to Take Toward the Burmese" and ordered it to be observed. We also made efforts to see to it that the order was carried out. The pamphlet contained articles on the differences in manners and customs between the two peoples to clear away any misunderstanding so it might contribute to the friendship between them. It is the regret of this deponent that the pamphlet and the Area Army Commander KIMURA's telegram to the 15th Army Headquarters, mentioned above, cannot be submitted to the Tribunal because they had been lost or burned at the time of our retreat through enemy lines after the failure of the battle of Irrawaddy.

Besides at the end of war all documents other than those concerning personnel affairs, accounts and supplies, and military sanitation, and particularly any document having any connection with strategy and policy were burned by order of superior authorities.

4. By the time of the opening of the battle of Irrawaddy, General KIMURA had held meetings at the Area Army Headquarters in Rangoon for the purpose of consulting with respective army

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staff officers and unit commanders about problems of strategy, education and self-government. At each meeting General KIMURA gave necessary instructions. At the meeting on strategy when I presented myself, he delivered repeated addresses in reference to the maintenance of military discipline and to winning public favor. It was also emphasized to the same effect at other meetings. We, as his subordinates, concentrated our efforts to carry them out in obedience to his intentions.

Because of racial similarities, from the very beginning, the Japanese Army and the Burmese people were well disposed toward each other. Generally the Japanese Army was cautious and prudent in action and enforced strict military discipline and thereby had won the confidence of the Burmese people at large. With the increasingly heavier pressure of troubles by war, an anti-war feeling was gradually stealing into the hearts of the Burmese people. Particularly since the latter period of the battle of Irrawaddy, in view of Japan's obvious defeat, an anti-Japanese tendency seemed to have been brought about among a certain portion of the people, from the time of the revolt of the Burmese National Defense Army.

6. After the failure of the operations in the Impahl zone, the 15th Army suffered heavy losses both in number of troops and arms. Remarkable decline was seen of morale and physical strength. More than that, a great number of soldiers were

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suffering from diseases. Thus it was quite difficult for the 15th Army to regain its combat power. Little supply was sent from the rear and we prepared with much difficulty for the coming battle of Irrawaddy. But about the middle of February 1945, a frontal attack by predominant British-Indian Forces was attempted. In parallel with this action, a flank attack was made by British-Indian Mechanized Corps which had broken into Burma by way of Meiktila early in March. As a result, our lines were cut off on all sides, and each corps was forced into an isolated position. Every means of communication by land was cut off and, owing to the want of electric batteries, wireless communication was barely available resulting in insufficiency of command and communication. Under such situation, it was decided to rearrange our lines on the Shan Heights ranging east of Meiktila, and orders were issued to respective corps to break through the enemy siege and to assemble troops near Kalow. However, during this time we again suffered losses of a great many men and arms. Since then we often encountered the enemy. Forced marches, covering long distances, were ventured; food was scarce and there were lots of patients to go with us; communication was entirely cut off for a long time. Under such conditions the 31st and 33rd Divisions moved to the Tenasserim zone for a short stay, and the Army Headquarters and the 15th Division continued on

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their way to Siam. The mountains which they had to go over were so rugged and steep that every soldier, taking with him nothing other than his portable weapon, retreated literally with bare life. Many of the soldiers died of disease on the way. It was difficult for a minor unit to pass the zone west of Roykow (TN?) and that south of Kamipew (TN?) for attacks by guerrillas obstructed the march so often that the troops were compelled to take up a challenge while retreating. Since May 7, 1945, the 15th Army gradually assembled its forces in the Tenasserim district. Owing to the forced march over a long distance and the attacks by the guerrillas and British-Indian Forces, our soldiers were entirely fatigued both mentally and physically and 70-80% of them were ill. A large part of arms was lost. There were almost no materials and apparatus for the use of communication, so that it was extremely difficult for every commander to keep his men under his command. The Headquarters was situated at the Mouchi (TN?) mines 14 miles east of Toungoo. Every night there we suffered from attacks by guerrillas. The guerrillas also waylaid those smaller units which passed the Toungoo and Kamipew (TN?) roads, to attack them from top of cliffs or by bridges and almost never failed to kill or would some of our soldiers.

Beginning early in June 1945, the communication by land was scarcely possible, as this was the heaviest rainy season.