

No. 3089

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

Deponent :- ICHIDA Jiro

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.

1. ICHIDA, Jiro is my name.

I was born on December 29, 1894. My present address is Showa-dori, Nakama-machi, Onga-gun, Fukuoka-ken.

I entered the Military Academy in 1914.

In April 1944, after having been employed in various departments, I was appointed Vice Chief of Staff of the Burma Area Army, which office I held till the termination of the war. I was then a Major-General. My chief duty during this period was to assist the Chief of Staff.

2. On September 1944 that General [unclear] [unclear],

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2. It was mid September 1944 that General KIMURA, Heitaro, arrived at his post as Commander of the Burma Area Army. Our Army there had suffered a crushing defeat in the Imphal campaign with its fighting strength weakened considerably, and since about August 1943, supplies had almost ceased to come from Japan.

3. General KIMURA, who arrived when things were in such an unfavorable state, issued a set of instructions to all the troops under his command enjoining them strongly to maintain military discipline and to try to win the confidence of the natives.

When we had meetings in late October and in the middle of December 1944, and in late January 1945, the General summoned to the Army Headquarters the staff officers and unit commanders under his command and reminded them most carefully of the instructions he had previously given, (the draft of the instructions and other documents related to the same are not extant, having been either lost or burnt while retiring). While in office, General KIMURA constantly endeavored hard to see his instructions obeyed thoroughly by his troops, so that the Burmese people came to place a good deal of confidence in him.

The General met the Burmese State Ministers at least once or twice a month for the purpose of exchanging free and outspoken opinions. He welcomed the complaints against the Japanese and in the cases that he thought proper had the requested improvements made. Meanwhile the war situation had been developing unfavorably from day to day for us, entailing

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increasing hardships and suffering on the part of the natives. The General felt sorry for their plight. When he had occasion to meet the Burmese high-ranking officials he always expressed his gratitude for their good will and at the same time showed sympathy for their delicate circumstances. General KIMURA instructed his men to contribute to the stabilization of living conditions of the Burmese at the expense of the strategical requirements.

General KIMURA always took pains to promote good feeling and harmony between Japanese and Burmese. In order to prevent misunderstandings likely to arise because of the difference in the manners and customs and language, he had a two-volume booklet compiled, entitled "The Attitude to take toward the Burmese" and distributed copies not only among our men, but also among the greater part of the Japanese residents for their guidance and observance. (I tried to get a copy but so far haven't been able to lay hands on one.) At the same time he asked the Burmese Government to tell their people plainly of our readiness and desire to act in concert with them. The government on their part distributed the summarized translation of the general's request among the prefectural governors for their information. The result of the general's efforts was reflected in the fact that the friendly and harmonious relations between the army and the populace were notably improved and

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our men, appreciating their commander's spirit and intention, did their best to realize his wishes.

I used to attend the Japanese-Burmese Cooperation Conference as a representative of the Burma Area Army, and so I had ample opportunities to come in contact with the high governmental officials. Mindful of the general's care and the Burmese official thoughts and opinions, I took care to cooperate with the government in their undertakings in all ways, and to ensure the stabilization of the livelihood of the populace.

4. The general war situation during General KIMURA's tenure of office was:

His arrival at his post coincided with the concentration of the main force toward the River Irrawaddy following the crushing defeat we had suffered at Imphal. He had hardly assumed his new duty before he advanced to Maymyo, 18 September, 1944 and he devoted himself there to the conduct of military operations until around the 20th of October. The Japanese Army in Burma could barely manage to make preparations for the Irrawaddy battle by moving forward all the available troops to replenish the remaining strength of the 15th Corps that had taken part in the Imphal battle, though we were so circumstanced that it was next to impossible to leave behind any part of the general fighting troops requisite for the preservation of peace and safeguarding of the rear area. On the 3rd of February 1945,

General KIMURA and his army advanced as far as Kalow where the General conducted the operations himself. He remained there 16th of February. Owing to our inferiority in fighting power, especially in equipment such as planes, tanks and fire-projectors, the Japanese lines were pierced all along, and again we were forced to retreat with heavy losses. The 15th and 33rd Corps managed somehow to set about the concentration operation to the Tanasserim area mid-May 1945, and completed the movement by their main bodies in June. The fighting strength of these armies was sadly diminished, with the best part of the arms

being lost, and the soldiers physically were most seriously deteriorated; in fact, more than ten thousand of them had to be invalided to Thailand. The 28 Corps had its retreat cut off and was obliged to stay in the Pegu district for about three months isolated from the others. In late July 1945, when the rainy season was at its worst, this disjoined army desperately charged into the enemy force, losing thereby the better part of its strength and the whole of its major arms. When the war came to an end the troops were still retreating without having met the main body.

The withdrawal of the Burma Area Army Headquarters from Rangoon to Moulmein commenced at the end of April 1945, the complete concentration being effected at the beginning of July. The headquarters, however, could not function as it should; its hasty retreat to Moulmein, the loss of communication and trans-

transportation equipment and the important documents, the transference of many skilled staff-officers, the unsatisfactory replacements among the administrative personnel, frequent air raids by British-Indian planes and the fact that it was at the peak of the rainy season -- all these factors interfered with the satisfactory functioning of the Army headquarters. Above all, the air raids by the British-Indian planes which were conducted in the daytime and on moonlight nights as well, frequently compelled the headquarters to seek shelter in the outlying villages of Moulmein and attend to its duties there. And most of the soldiers, too, not to speak of the invalids, had to seek shelter in the jungles both day and night.

At the end of March 1945, with the state of things prevailing so unfavorably, the national defense army of Burma, numbering 6,000-8,000 rose against the Japanese and the guerrillas started a campaign of harassing our rear lines and were greatly menaced.

The Burma National Defense Army had seemed favorable to the Japanese, as an agreement was arranged at Rangoon with the Japanese army for united operations. The revolt was an unexpected one for the Japanese. Afterwards, it became clear that a secret declaration of war against Japan had been made and signed by Major General Onsan on 14 March 1945. For this purpose they had previously stationed numbers of men in the rear of the Japanese army, at the key strategic points, such as

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Toungoo, Pegu, and Thaton. The main body in Henzada, with the outbreak of the uprising, destroyed the means of communication and transportation at several places, assaulted the sentry-guards, squads of soldiers and gendarmerie squads at various places, murdering most of these officers and seizing the money and stores kept in their custody. Espionage was engaged in by the guerrillas so that the Headquarters of the Burma Area Army and the 28th and the 33rd Corps headquarters were subjected to serious bombings with heavy losses to us, and the Japanese officers in charge of the national defense militia were for the most part killed. Of the 200 odd Japanese nationals, including the interpreters and the commercial clerks who were in the Delta region, only a few were found safe at the end of the war and the rest are still missing.

However, General KIMURA sought no revenge. On the contrary, he stressed the importance of the friendship hitherto kept up between Japan and Burma and met the situation from a strategical point of view only. There were left no forces to meet the emergency. A small amount of troops and part of the 55th division which had been dispatched for aid in the quarter of Bassein and Meiktila were used for the purpose of making a false show of strength.

From January 1945 there began to be formed one after another guerrilla parties of Karen and Kachin tribes in the



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mountain regions south of Kemapew and Kaukareik area and in the regions south of Papun. What with the entry of the Indian educated Burmese, the arrival of Indians and British officers by means of parachutes and the replenishment by air of arms and munitions, the guerrillas grew rapidly in strength till the groups were scattered far and wide, working most actively in collusion with the rebels. The 31st and the 33rd Divisions were offered resistance at several places on their retreat from Kemapew and sustained heavy losses..

In the strategical areas in general and Tenasserim Province in particular, we were constantly harassed till the end of the war by the activities of the rebels and the guerrilla groups. They sprang surprise attacks upon the Japanese armies inflicting heavy losses to the latter. And this was especially the case in the rainy season when small Japanese parties of troops, weary and exhausted, were in retreat. Then these troops were assaulted and deprived of their arms or of their lives. In late July 1945, as the 28th Corps, while trying to cross the Sittaung River, met with a stout resistance from the guerrillas and their associates on both banks of the river. In a nameless village on the western bank of the river, 40 or 50 kilometers to the northwest of Swe-gyin, ten Japanese Red Cross were assaulted and not one of them came back alive, (this, according to the report of the soldier who was with the

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victims at the time of the incident). For all of these cases of resistance on the part of the Burmese, General KIMURA always warned his troops against taking retaliatory measures.

Such being the case while General KIMURA was commanding, there was no chance whatever for us to take British-Indian troops as prisoners. Thus the situation of the Burma Area Army for the few months before the end of the war was a succession of defeats. In consequence of the defeats and the subsequent decline in the army's fighting strength, our men were demoralized; they were both physically and morally in a state of exhaustion. The Japanese troops who were scattered in small groups all over the operations areas were overpowered by a sense of defeat, and had their minds occupied only with the question of how to defend themselves against the Burmese rebel army and the guerrillas.

The harassing activities that these hostile groups were carrying on in the rear of our army, the loss and destruction of the means of communication, the lack of fresh supplies of dry cell batteries, traffic disturbances caused by British planes, the interruption of communications during the highest rainy season -- all these factors combined to all but paralyze the entire working system of the Burma Area Army, thus rendering it very difficult for the officers to lead and supervise their men properly. As the Burma Area