

No 2622

Mr. Keenan

Ex 2622

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INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL for the FAR EAST

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA et al

vs.

ARAKI, Sadao et al

SWORN DEPOSITION

Deponent: HASEMOTO, GWA

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. I, HASHIMOTO, Gun, am an ex-lieutenant general living at No. 456, Kitazawa 4 Chome, Setagaya Ward, Tokyo Metropolis.

I served as the Chief Staff-Officer of the Japanese Garrison in China from August, the 11th Year of Showa (1936) to the end of August, the 12th Year of Showa (1937) and experienced the breakout of the China Incident. At the end of August, when the North China Area Army was organized, I was transferred to the post of Chief Staff-Officer of the First Army. While I was engaged in operations in the district along the PEKING-HANKOW Railway in North China, I was moved to the post of Chief of the First Section, General Staff (as Major General) on January 12, the 13th Year of Showa, and arrived in Tokyo on January 18. My predecessor in office was Major General SHIMOMURA, Sadamu.

2. My assumption of the new post happened to correspond generally to the time when the Japanese Government issued the so-called "Do not take the National Government seriously" announcement on January 16 as a result of the failure of Sino-Japanese peace negotiations through the mediation of German Ambassador TRAUTMANN to reach a conclusion.

As to the strategy, it was a period of quiet after TAIYUAN, SHICHIACHUAN and TSINAN in North China and NANKING and PENGFU in Middle China were captured. The national government was at HANKOW.

3. Around the time when I assumed the new post the Supreme Command authorities were studying future plans of operation in all directions. Actually, the China Incident itself broke out contrary to our country's intentions and its execution thenceforth showed gradual expansion of the area concerned, against our wish. As early a settlement of the Incident as possible, however, was the consistent desire of the authorities in the Supreme Command.

But the hope of peace negotiations was dimmed as a result of the Government's announcement made on January 16, 1936 and Japan was forced to entrench herself for a long term war. Thus, special effort was necessary to strengthen the national power, namely, the amplification of production, the reinforcement of armament, the renovation of the domestic front, etc.

Alongside with this program for controlling domestic affairs, military operations were also brought into a stage of temporary prolongation. It was the conclusion at that time that positive operations were to be temporarily avoided in order not to extend the battlefield until resolute large-scale operations should become feasible in order to bring the Incident to a final conclusion at one blow after having waited for a replenishment of fighting power. Really, at that time, both military power was short as well as munitions, to continue large-scale operations against China. It was impossible, on the other hand, to pour our whole strength into operations against China as we were faced with the necessity of preparing against the menace of Soviet Russia.

The Military Supreme Command stuck to the principle of not approving any positive operation by any Army except the mopping-up operation in Southern SHANHSI conceived by the First Army at that time and to confine itself to the preservation of peace on the spot and maintaining the existing battle line.

Around that time, there were many among those in the operational area and central circles who were of the opinion that it would be advantageous to re-open the TIENTSIN-PUKOW Railway by connecting the Central China Detached Army which had advanced from NANKING to PENGFU and the Second Army which had advanced to TSINAN. This opinion was not agreed to by the Military Supreme Command as any expansion of the operational area would be accompanied by the

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disadvantage of requiring large forces for its defence.

4. This principle of operation, not to extend the operational area, however, necessarily changed by the actual situation within a few months. Namely, each Army was continuously engaged in battle contacting the

enemy on the front line of the operational area. As the front was far too wide in comparison with our forces and a fixed line could not be kept to defend and stop the enemy's counter-attacks, partisan skirmishes were being continuously repeated causing the front line to lose stability.

This state was especially conspicuous in front of the Second Army and the enemy's counter-attacks were persistent, removing the front line gradually toward the south and causing severe damage to a part of our Army in the battle around TAIERHCHUAN. Thus, the Third Army with lesser forces than three divisions began to fight hard battles.

Meanwhile, the Chinese Army gradually concentrated large forces along the LANCHOW-HAICHOW Railway around HSUCHOW and around April, the 13th year of SHOWA (1938) their forces amounted to about 40 divisions around HSUCHOW, it being judged that they had gathered the main forces of the Chinese Central Army into this area. The situation was so serious that no further neglect could be allowed. Thereupon, the Military Supreme Command recognized the necessity of making a great effort to reopen communications between the South and North by dealing a heavy blow to the Chinese main force in their presence. Thus, the battle of HSUCHOW was decided upon in spite of the shortage of our forces. At that time, this plan was decided upon between the last part of April and the early part of May 1938.

5. With the aim of squeezing the Chinese main forces around HSUCHOW from the North and South, about three divisions of the Central China Detached Army from the South and about five divisions from the North mainly comprising the Second Army of the North China Detached Army reinforced by two divisions of the First Army and two mixed brigades from MANCHURIA were put into operation.

In this battle the enemy appeared to have been seized perfectly, but at the last moment, those who escaped through the gap of our enclosure amounted to a considerable number and we could not deliver the final annihilating blow which was at first expected. The causes were to be attributed to the wide and flat nature of the terrain and the insufficiency of our forces used. At that time, we made great effort to use as large forces as possible and to gain a decisive result but what we could gather were, as previously related, only eight divisions in all. In order to gather these forces, it was necessary to make a bold arrange-

ment so that many weak points appeared in many places on the battle line. As a result, during this battle and immediately after it, the large southern part of SHANHSI Province was recaptured by enemy counter-attack taking advantage of our weak forces, and our troops were enveloped everywhere.

6. The WUCHAN-HANKOW operation was planned after the battle around HSUCHOW with the aim of taking a chance of leading to the settlement of the incident by dealing a heavy blow to the Chinese main force which was gathered in the WUCHAN-HANKOW district and becoming so powerful that, strategically, further neglect could not be allowed. Our plan was for the Second Army, main force, to be pushed forward on a wide front from the northeast to HANKOW and for a smaller part to march along the Yantze River. This plan was forced to undergo fundamental changes resulting in considerable delay in the preparation for the operation by the fact that the Chinese Army destroyed the bank of the Yellow River at the last stage of the battle of HSUCHOW and caused the inundation of a wide area resulting in great difficulty in concentrating and deploying troops, not to mention the loss of lines of communication.

At the important period of this preparation, in the middle of July, the CHANGKUFENG Incident suddenly broke out putting the Supreme Command in a state of deep anxiety.

7. On July 13, 1938, we received a telegraphic report from the Korean Army to the effect that about forty Soviet troops had crossed the frontier near CHANGCHI on July 11th and had occupied CHANGKUFENG constructing positions. The Supreme Command thought this only a small conflict which was of the nature of those usually occurring on the border line of Soviet Russia and Manchuria, but as the CHOSEN Army was not used to dealing with such affairs, and besides, as we were fully occupied with the preparation of the WUCHAN-HANKOW operation, we (the Supreme Command) did not wish the incident to become aggravated, so it was decided to order the CHOSEN Army to adopt a cautious attitude, and to settle the affair through regular diplomatic channels. So this policy was telegraphed to the CHOSEN Army and, at the same time, the War Ministry proposed to the Foreign

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Office the negotiation of the affair. At that time General NAKAMURA, Kotaro was on the eve of his departure for CHOSEN as the new Commander of the CHOSEN Army, so he must have been instructed in that sense before his departure by the superior authorities and I myself, when I saw him off on the morning of his departure at HANEDA Airfield, have talked to him about the same principle again.

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8. The Supreme Command, seeing that the diplomatic negotiations over the Changkufeng Incident were hanging fire, and fearing, in the interval, that the opposing forces may carelessly aggravate the conflict, decided to call back the peacetime units of the Chosen Army to their original station, the unit which had been ordered to move as support to the boundary garrison in the emergency, and decided to watch developments quietly. So orders to this effect were issued on July 26, but on July 29, we received a report to the effect that the Soviet troops had made a sortie to high ground about 1,000 meters south of Shatsaofeng. Our boundary garrison had been obliged to drive them back. Then the Soviet troops again delivered a counter attack against us, crossing the boundary line by 500 meters. We were now set up in opposition to them. But as the Chosen Army was content to drive the enemy back to the outside of Manchurian territory, it was ordering its units not to extend the affair further. On the part of the Supreme Command, though it approved the measures taken by the units on the spot, it stuck to the principle of absolutely not enlarging the affair beyond its present proportions, and ordered the Chosen Army not to develop military operations as long as the army was not challenged by the Soviet forces, and to assume cautious action in general.

9. After August 1, the activities of the Soviet Army became more and more positive; the bombardment by superior artillery forces; bombing by airplanes at various points in Korea, and, at the same time, infantry attack supported by tank units were repeated almost every day. Our front

line units repulsed them every time, but never trespassed beyond the boundary, always retiring to the garrison line. Repeating this method our casualties were augmented every day. At this time the Chosen Army proposed to use our air unit stationed in the northern Chosen district to counteract the Soviet offensive, but as the calling out of the air force might lead to the progressive expansion of military activity, the Supreme Command did not concede to the request.

Taking into consideration the offensive attitude of the Soviet forces, we retained in Manchuria, under the direct command of the Central Authorities, for the time being, about one division, which was on its way to China, in order to provide for a probable emergency.

The Chosen Army was very faithful to the principle of the Central Authorities and maintained the boundary line bearing well the disadvantageous tactics and notwithstanding heavy casualties. By the conclusion of the truce agreement on August 11 the affair was finally settled.

10. The Wuchang-Hankow Operation plans were changed as above stated, and the main forces were moved along the line of the Yangtze River and it became a difficult operation. This operation aimed at a speedy termination of the Incident. So with the purpose of bringing about the most advantageous result, we recognized the necessity of cutting the main artery of the enemy's line of supply of munitions from abroad—the Canton-Hankow line, and at the same time we planned the Canton operation. Eventually we occupied Canton on October 21, landing forces at Bias Bay of three divisions. The operation around Wuchang-Hankow was a little retarded, but on October 27, Wuchang and Hankow were occupied, and the National Government fled to Chungking.

11. With the close of the WUCHANG-HANKOW operations, fighting assumed a truly protracted phase, so that we resorted to the least possible consumption of fighting power. We held the WUCHANG-HANKOW district and the CANTON district as the only operational areas, and stationed in each an army in a rather concentrated form, ready against the enemy's counter-attack. The rest of the occupied territories were held as peaceful areas. Over these vast areas we placed our forces in scattered formation and had them attend exclusively to the maintenance of peace and order in these territories. Against Chungking, we pressed on with a blockade and aerial operations, hoping thereby to quicken the termination of the Incident. The KONOE statement of 22 December 1938 was an attempt to bring about peace by following up the results of the WUCHANG-HANKOW operations with regard to the peace movement that followed under Wang Chao-ming, we stood aloof as observers while hoping that it would, as an internal question among the Chinese people, develop into the establishment of a new central government by the cooperation of Wang Chao-ming and Chiang Kai-shek and eventually lead up to the solution of the Incident. Consequently all the subsequent operations, whether large or small in scale, were directed according to the dictates of this great aim and hope. The operations for such places as Swatow, Hainan and Nanning were carried out for blockading purposes, while those for Nanchang, Changsha and Ichang were conducted in response to the enemy's counter-attacks. The minor operations in North China, on the other hand, were necessary for the

security of peace in these garrisoned regions.

12. Our military action in China, seen from the standpoint of tactics, was most unsystematic and haphazard from the very beginning of the China Incident. As it must have become already clear from what I have said so far, our action in China was not based on any premeditated and well-planned program, backed by sufficient fighting power. The reason for our resorting to such haphazard manoeuvring was simple. We did not like to go into hostilities with China and we feared the Russian menace in the north.

The Russian military force in the Far East which had been increasingly strengthened since the Manchurian Incident was a great menace to Japan, against which our Supreme Command exhausted its wits in thinking out counter-measures. This was the chief cause of the fear entertained by our Supreme Command at the outbreak of the China Incident. In the execution of operations during the progress of the Incident security against Russia was always the most necessary premise, so that the Supreme Command had to direct the Chinese operations always with close observation on the movement of the Far Eastern Russian Army. At the time of the CHANGKUFENG Incident, most of our forces were concentrated on the WUCHANG-HANKOW operations, leaving only six divisions in Manchuria against more than twenty divisions of the Far Eastern Russian forces.

This will clearly endorse the strenuous efforts made by the Supreme Command to prevent the expansion of the Incident.

13. Through the WUCHANG-HANKOW operations and the Canton operations, we had gradually to increase our forces in China. After the close of the above operations, our army got ready for a protracted and persistent war and adhered to the policy of preserving as much fighting power as possible. However, with the extension of occupied territories, it was necessary to reinforce our garrison forces, so that there was not a bit of surplus strength left in our army. The following figures show the distribution of our forces from the end of 1938 to the outbreak of the Nomonhan Incident in the following year:

China	27	divisions
Manchuria	8	"
Korea	1	"
Homeland	1	"

We estimated the strength of the Far Eastern Russian force at that time to consist of at least 30 sharpshooting divisions, 2,000 tanks and 2,000 airplanes.

Speaking of munitions needed for military operations, since we had our hands full with replenishing the operational consumption against China as well as with organizing new units, we could not provide for satisfactory reserve stores of dispensable materials. At the time of the Nomonhan Incident the quantity of operational materials which the Kwantung Army possessed was far from sufficient, compared with the number of its troops. Already at the first stage of hostility, our troops experienced hard fighting due to the insufficient supply of arms and ammunition.

Later on such arms as anti-tank guns which belonged to the armed forces in China were used for re-equipping the troops of the Kwangtung Army.

In short, Japan at that time was not capable of contemplating an attack against Soviet Russia so much so she did her utmost to avoid starting any trouble with Soviet Russia.

14. The Nomonhan Incident broke out when on May 12th 1939 the Outer Mongolian forces crossed the Harka River which was designated as the border line between Manchoukuo and Outer Mongolia and attacked Manchurian armed forces.

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It was plain enough that Outer Mongolia was the one who was responsible for the occurrence of the Incident. On account of the invasion, the Kwantung Army on the ground of its obligations dispatched a squad which drove the invading troops away outside the border. However every time it accomplished its mission, the squad returned to the place where it had been formerly stationed. This means that although the Kwantung Army did not connive at the invasion of Manchoukuo's border line, it took every possible care to avoid the further development of the incident. The Central Authorities in Japan was informed of the details of the incident and the measure taken by the Kwantung Army was fully complied with the intention of the Central Authorities which left the settlement of the incident to the Kwantung Army. Meanwhile, investigation on the part of the General Staff and the Ministry of War decided the general principle for settling the Homonhan Border Incident on May 31st.

The gist of the principle was as follows:

"We place confidence in the policy of the Kwantung Army which endeavors to localize the incident by punishing and pulverizing the invading Outer Mongolian forces and Soviet ground and air forces within the border with elastic military operations. We shall, with the future development of the incident, control operations of the Kwantung Army and are expecting the Army to terminate hostilities by making the enemy ^{refrain from} entering the district north of Harka River through his failure in operation.

15. On the 19th of June, the Outer Mongolian Army of 1,000 strong, with 50 tanks and more than 10 guns, crossed the border and attacked the Manchurian Army; and about 15 airplanes of the USSR bombed Haronai Shan and another 30 bombed Kanchurmiao area. Therefore, the Kwantung Army ordered the 23rd Division, 1 Infantry Regiment of the 7th Division, and 2 regiments of tanks, under the command of the 23rd Division Commander, to repulse the Soviet-Mongolian forces which had crossed the border, and, at the same time, to stop USSR air activity, the Kwantung Army sent out an air force to bomb the advanced air base in Tomsk.

This air raid was quite justifiable to the Kwantung Army, but the Supreme Command, desiring the incident be kept small, decided it wise to prohibit air activities and sent the head of the 1st Section to notify the Kwantung Army on the 29th of June that it should endeavor to limit ground fighting within the Manchuria and Mongolia border district, east of Lake Baikal, and that air activities over enemy base be discontinued.

As the result of this, the air force of the Kwantung Army discontinued the air raids over Tomsk and confined its activities to repulsing the attacking enemy. The Soviet air force increased its bombing activities and began bombing deep into the interior of Manchuria, therefore, the Kwantung Army again emphasized the necessity of bombing the USSR and Mongolian air bases, but firmly in view of the general situation the Supreme Command refused it. When the Commander of the Kwantung Army was summoned to Tokyo, the reason for its impossibility was explained by the Supreme Command and permission was not granted in spite of his repeated request.

The situation of the air force entering the month of August was in a condition where the enemy base had to be neutralized in order to maintain fighting power of the air force. Thereupon, as a result of the repeated inspection of the condition

On the spot by the Central authorities, and also considering the repeated demand by the Kwantung Army, on August 3rd it was acknowledged that/^{air}combat tactic be revised for self defense. On August 7th an order was issued to the Kwantung Army to the effect that it could attack, with its air units, the enemy air bases in the vicinity of Tomsk and the district east of it for the Nomonhan area operation, if the situation necessitated it.

16. After August 20, the Soviet Mongolian forces launched large scale attacks and in about a week's fighting the 23rd Division suffered tremendous loss. The estimated strength of the Soviet Mongolian forces at the time was: 3 sniper Divisions, 5 mechanized Brigades, several hundred air planes, a regiment of the Army General Reserve Artillery, several regiments of Army Corp Artillery, and 2 Divisions of the Outer Mongolian Cavalry. At that time, the German Soviet Non-Aggression Treaty was made and in the Hulunbair district the cold of the winter had already set in. The advent of bitter cold was imminent, so the Supreme Command was very eager to settle the incident before the setting in of cold winter.

The Kwantung Army, in accordance with this situation, took measures for sending about 3 Divisions to the front for reinforcement. The Supreme Command, in order to make up for the deficiency in the military strength for the defence of Manchuria, considered extracting 2 Divisions from the forces in China, but as a result of further investigation of the real situation, it judged that the throwing in of large forces may contrarily make more difficult a speedy settlement of the Incident. Thus, the plan for transferring 2 Divisions was abandoned.

On August 30th, the Imperial Headquarters issued an order to the effect that the intention is to keep the northern frontier of Manchuria peaceful, setting part of the Imperial forces against the Soviet Union, until the China Incident is settled. For this purpose, a plan to terminate military operation as soon as possible in "Nomonhan" areas was to be formed without spreading hostile actions. The Commander of the Kwangtung Army should try to sustain with the smallest military strength. On issuance of this order, Vice-Chief of Staffs, General NAKAJIMA, rushing to Changchun, delivered it to the Kwangtung Army.

The Supreme Command expected that the Kwangtung Army, by this order, would change its order of battle. However, it was made clear that the dispute should be settled after the Army gave a hard blow upon the enemy force with reinforced military strength as based on the primary plan. Just then, the European War broke out. Therefore, the Supreme Command, judging the time has come to settle the dispute through diplomatic negotiation, hurriedly sent Vice-Chief of Staffs, General NAKAJIMA again on September 3rd to Changchun to deliver an order that in view of the present situation, henceforth the Supreme Command would attempt to settle the border troubles of "Nomonhan" area autonomously and the Commander of the Kwangtung Army should suspend the offensive actions in that area.

The situation was at that time that the Kwangtung Army had already issued an order of the offensive and consequently its units were going to start their military actions on September 10th. The Commander was in an awkward position. Thereupon the central authorities speeded up the management

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concerning personnel affairs, and new Commander General UMLZU, arriving at Changchun on September 8th as a successor, took command of the Army.

The step taken by the Imperial Headquarters concerning the "Nomonhan" dispute as stated above, was carried out under a complete agreement with the War Ministry authorities. There was no different opinion among them.

18. Based on the cease-fire agreement concluded between TOGO and Molotov in Moscow through diplomatic negotiations, the order of the Imperial Headquarters concerning the suspension of hostile actions was issued immediately on September 16th, and the "Nomonhan" Dispute was settled.

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OATH

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

HASHIMOTO, Gun (seal)

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On this 5th day of January, 1947

At Tokyo

DEPONENT HASHIMOTO, Gun (seal)

I, BANNO, Junkichi hereby certify that the above statement was sworn by the Deponent, who affixed his signature and seal thereto in the presence of this witness.

On the same date

At the same place

Witness: (signed) BANNO, Junkichi (seal)

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TRANSLATION CERTIFICATE

I, William E. Clarke, of the Defense Language Branch, hereby certify that the foregoing translation described in the above certificate is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, a correct translation and is as near as possible to the meaning of the original document.

/s/ William E. Clarke

Tokyo, Japan

Date 11 April 1947

(AFFIDAVIT OF HASHIMOTO, GUN)