

EVACUEE REPORTS:

ZIMMERMAN,

BENJAMIN C.

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GENERAL HEADQUARTERS  
SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA  
MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SECTION GENERAL STAFF

APD 500  
6 July 1944

Philippine Evacuee Report #193

Subject : PANAY  
From : Benjamin Chester ZIMMERMAN

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Name : Benjamin Chester Zimmerman  
Born : 1910 in Helena, Montana  
Education : High School  
Occupation : Mill superintendent of IXL Mining  
Company, Masbate  
Service : Guerrilla Lieutenant CE on Panay  
Assignment : Engineers, 6th Military District  
In PI : Since 1936

Interrogated by G-2 GHQ SWPA

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Zimmerman spent much of his time mapping the island of Panay, and his actual contact with the combat guerrilla forces was limited to what he saw on trips with Major FERTIG and on several missions to the west coast. He had much closer contact with the civilians. His observations are believed to be without prejudice.

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Guerrillas on Panay The guerrilla forces on Panay do not expect to be called for use beyond Panay. They are confident that they can wipe out the Japanese on the island when the time comes, and that nothing more will be asked of them. PERALTA assured Zimmerman that he could wipe the Japanese out entirely. Zimmerman did not think that the guerrillas could do this.

The morale of the army is not bad, but their efficiency is poor. Zimmerman considered that there were only one or two groups which could block a road and hold the block for 24 hours, given reasonable equipment. The guerrillas now run to the hills immediately upon the coming of a Japanese patrol into the vicinity. The people are left to face the Japanese unprotected, and see their food and possessions taken without even a shot being fired in return. The people do not mind losing possessions, but they bewail the fact that the army takes so much of their supplies and then exacts no penalties from the Japanese.

The supply situation depends on civilians. The army makes no attempt to provide itself with food, and is apparently a haven where men do little but sit around and hike. This is discouraging to the civilians and they are beginning to be fed up with it.

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Peralta has been attempting to remedy this situation by strict enforcement of regulations and by propaganda.

Several people have been killed, or had their property entirely confiscated, in the name of the army. People actually have had to give more than they could afford. This is very hard on the people who see the army sitting around and running when the enemy patrols come. Zimmerman was of the opinion that with continued food raids by the Japanese and continued semi-terror tactics by the guerrillas, the people would no longer stand for guerrilla demands. Their morale would be broken entirely, and they would submit to the puppet government.

All guerrillas expect to be paid at the end of the war at US Army rates of pay. Colonel NAKAR sent them a table of pay rates before he surrendered, and this is posted in Headquarters. The army continues to reinduct surrendered guerrillas. Apparently, Peralta is anxious to keep up his paper strength.

The "reparations" bill on Panay after the war is going to be huge. The army has given receipts in vast quantities. People have kept detailed lists of things taken by the army and not receipted. False values have been signed for and false replacement values are expected in other cases. In addition the army is now counting on insurance benefits from the US Government.

Filipino officers are sensitive to white patronage and the presence of an American tends to aggravate this feeling. Army officers often give the impression that they think Americans feel superior and think Filipinos should do more with an American watching them than they would otherwise. In addition there was some feeling that they were fighting our war, when their own nation should be their main worry. They want to seek their national salvation by themselves.

**MAPPING PROJECT** : The guerrillas were carrying out a mapping project in the Sara area in August 1943. This is a project to transfer the 1:200,000 series of Panay to scale 1:50,000. The project was well under way at that time. The transfer had been made, and the men were filling in the map and correcting it. When the Japanese came to Sara in September 1943, the work sheets were buried.

**SUPPLY DISTRIBUTION** : Supplies which have been sent from SWPA into Panay have not been widely distributed. Zimmerman believed that a good many of these supplies were filched by the officers and men before they arrived at Headquarters. There wasn't a great deal Peralta could do about it, since GARCIA, submarine contact man, was so powerful that Peralta had to treat him with kid gloves. Many of these supplies later appeared on the black market at exorbitant prices.

**JOE HERMAN** : Captain CE, Executive Officer for the Engineers, 6th MD, Commissioned a Lieutenant by General CHRISTIE. Killed self and family 20-23 September 1943. Had previously said that he would never let the Japanese capture himself or his family.

**BAGLEYS** : American couple living near Estancia, Capiz.

**FATHER BREHETON** : British priest near Pandan, Antique.

**FATHER SCHWEER** : British priest near Pandan, Antique.

**FATHERS DALY AND KERR** : Irish priests interned by the Japanese at Libacao in November 1943.

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Conditions in the Aklan

Before the Japanese punitive campaign started in October 1943, some medicines were available in the Aklan markets through vendors who were selling the remaining stocks of a few druggists and doctors. The Japs used medicine vendors out Iloilo City as spies. Prices were high. For example, a ten cc ampule of calcium gluconate cost ten to twenty pesos, and a small roll of bandage three pesos.

Khaiki cloth was available at sixty to eighty pesos for pants and shirt, compared with five to nine pesos before the war. There were many cotton print clothes in the Banga and Kalibo markets, but at high prices, and people were taking to the use of abaca cloth. A great deal of abaca cloth was woven in the Aklan area.

The food consisted of home grown products; rice, meat, vegetables, fruit, and canned foods ran out, except for a few cans here and there which were held for outrageous prices. Canned milk could be brought from Iloilo at seven-fifty a can.

Sail boats came from Manila to Kalibo or Ibaday, bringing matches, soap, cigarettes, cigars, rubber shoes in limited quantities, plowshares, and some clothes. Chickens, eggs, and abaca were being shipped out of Panay to Manila, but the army made an effort to stop the traffic about the time the Japanese became stricter as to supplies getting out of Manila, and there were few boats after June 1943.

In November and December 1943, the Japanese killed several hundred civilians, and others were obliged to come in and register. Many civilians and soldiers registered or surrendered to the Japanese and were released. In January 1944, about sixty Japanese were garrisoned in Kalibo and about twelve in Banga. The towns were deserted, and no markets were operating, making it difficult to secure food, especially meat and sugar.

Conditions in this area were very unsettled due to the uncertainty as to whether the Japs would reinforce and do more killing, and also to the fact that the army under Lt Col GRAS-PARIL was taking stern measures against any civilians suspected of having had any dealings with the Japs during the campaign.

The Japanese tried to get the soldiers who surrendered to tell of their army connections, and then released them with instructions to spy on the guerrillas who did not surrender. For example, a Cpl ORVISTA told Zimmerman that is what happened to him after he was persuaded to give himself up to save some members of his family. After being released, he hid from the Japs and his own army too, as he feared he would be shot by the guerrillas for having surrendered. Through the intercession of an officer he was again admitted to the guerrillas.

Sgt ANDRADE was stationed with three men at Daja, near Libacao, until the time of the Jap drive. He hid in the hills to avoid the Japs, and told Zimmerman in January 1944 that he had stayed away from friends and relatives alike, as most of them advised surrendering to the Japs. Other army men said that they were not welcome at the houses of some of their own relatives when the Japs were in the area, but this was because of fear of the Japs rather than any antagonism toward the army.

Japanese Administration

The Japanese are systematically rounding up people, municipality by municipality. They go to a municipality and demand that the tenientes come in and surrender. The tenientes are the final channel of law enforcement and government, and control the districts of each municipality. If the tenientes do not surrender, the Japanese threaten to kill the people in his districts or even municipality.

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In most cases, some of the tenientes have surrendered to stop Japanese threats, but their loyalty has not swerved, and they give any assistance possible to the guerrillas. Most of the tenientes on Panay have now been registered.

The Japanese are demanding that the tenientes and their barrios do specific tasks in certain times. The work is arbitrary and must be done. They have ordered construction of roads, repair of roads and bridges, cutting of trails, and similar jobs in this way.

Movement by Americans across the island is now pretty well blocked by the results of this campaign.

**CIVILIAN MORALE :** The common tao is definitely not hostile. They were all most generous to American civilian refugees, many of them risking their lives and property to assist Americans.

Governor CONFESOR is popular around the island among the common people. The military group had, they thought, stepped on their rights, and Confesor's efforts to protect them made him all the more popular. He put out a circular letter to the people telling them of their duties regarding working for the army, and the rate of pay. Zimmerman thought that Confesor's refusal to surrender, and his stand on the rights of the people, were largely responsible for his support.

The people of Panay feel that they have been slighted by the former government, one specific case being the spending of the proceeds from the oil excise. They believe that the distribution of the proceeds of this tax was unfavorable to Panay. Confesor is not a QUEZON man, possibly further explaining his popularity.

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