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Our growing customers testify satisfaction!

MEETING: Post-Invasion

By SGT. HARRY ECKSTEIN

People of the Philippines!

I come to you
from distant lands;
from the gray, silent skylines of America
which spell a nation at war and yet at peace,
a haven sheltered from the dread of conflict
from all its horrors but the horror
of surging emotions,
of tears and fruitless longing;
from the steaming wilderness, I come,
from loneliness in an ancient jungle,
the forsaken shores of slumbering isles,
the lands of malaria, dengue, and primitive graves.

In a larger sense I come to you from peaceful towns built on fertile soil, the surge and turmoil of great cities. the schools and shops, factories belching forth black smoke, trains passing at immoderate speed, the ice cream store on the corner. the immigrant next door, and teen-age girls screaming at Frank Sinatra.

I come to you with a pack on my back containing a blanket, underwear, soap and razor, messkit, tentage, socks, and a letter fondly preserved and remembered.

In my hands I hold at rifle, model M-l, with one deadly round in the chamber. eight in the clip, and eighty-eight in the rifle belt.

I wear a green uniform, dust-stained and dirty. soiled, uncomfortable shoes.

I come to you with all this; and I am told that I am your liberator, the proud warrior and victor, the immaculate conqueror.

And you come to me. People of the Philippines. From the tall, forbidding kills you come. barefoot and haggard, your eyes expressing some strange fright and your hands straining for alms, overcoming the pride in your hearts. You come from the unpainted houses. the soiled Nipa huts, the dark, cheerless dwellings where you sat in unlighted nights and fear-filled days. waiting, waiting, hoping despairing. You come from the ravaged cities, blood and starvation. the invader's yoke, the beast's existence. and the dull eyes turned southward.

containings a lost home, a trampled field, You come to me with the burden of years in your hearts, containing a lost home, a trampled field, the screams of a loved one, and the fear of death. You are burdened as I am burdened. but the load is great and cannot be placed aside for a rest and a moment's lingering. You come to me thus; and I am told that you are the conquered, the outraged and oppressed, the dependent, the silent sufferers. What shall be our meeting-place. People of the Philippines. we who come to each other? Is there some common ground, some common earth without demarkation for oppressed and victorious alike? Is there some peaceful plot where I may lay down my pack and you, your burden and we may commune and understand, and, understanding, become one? Or shall we always be worlds apartthe touched and untouched the rich and poor, the carcless and careworn? You have seen me streaming victoriously onto your shores and I have seen you drifting from master to master and I know one thing beyond our separate burdens, beyond the gulf, between alms and the giver. we are alike and the same in many and most important ways. From your eyes, from your sorrows, flow tears; I too have weptin the silent nights when remembrance awakens, at the grave where I buried a comrade. in the warrior's loneliness. my tears have flown. In your hearts, your expressions, there is longing; I too have longed.... And in your uplifted faces there is hope; I too have hopefor the peaceful night by the fire, the soothing touch of a loved one. for the sunset, the snow, the falling leaves, my heart has longed. for the return to the threshold, the growing harvest, man rising above his destruction. for fruitful labor in a fairer world I wait and hope. This is the earth on which to build our common world; these are the materials to build it. to temper and mold it. and such shall be its bases tears, longing and hope and the will of free man to rise and attain, to construct and keep, on the shattered earth of his home and heart.

