

NOTES FROM EXTEMPORANEOUS ADDRESS BY THE  
PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN CHAMBER OF  
COMMERCE PRIOR TO THE OPENING OF FORMAL  
BUSINESS AT THE MEETING HELD AUGUST 31,  
1948

I have a special announcement to make to all members of the Chamber. The other day, on behalf of our members and our board of governors, I visited General MacArthur and spent nearly an hour in conversation with him. He has authorized me to convey to the Chamber the substance of our discussions. I am sure you will all be pleased to learn that he welcomed most enthusiastically the appearance of our organization and extends to extends to it his approbation and support. But the real surprise is that he has agreed to speak, at some future date, before this Chamber, when we are fully organized and have consolidated our position as the body and spirit of American business in Japan.

I must stress emphatically, however, that no announcement of the General's generous consent to appear before us be made to anyone prior to his appearance here. It should not go beyond the walls of this Chamber. The demands upon him are heavy in the extreme and he would be plagued unmercifully by a host of other groups or individuals.

I am sure you will realize this is a signal honor since he makes few personal appearances, the last being over a year ago, on March 17, 1947. At that time he issued a statement the reverberations of which are still being heard around the world. There is no reason to suppose that, in these critical times, he would not deliver here a message of equal importance. All will agree that now is the time for our few elder statesman to speak out and give guidance in this troubled world.

The General recalled that he has had a long experience with various Chambers of Commerce, particularly in Manila, and he said he felt that our appearance on the scene was a sign of return to normalcy. He felt we could be of aid to the occupation. Specifically, he expressed the desire to avail himself of the mature business thinking of the members of the Chamber, the gentleman here today who represent major American banking, shipping, insurance, publications and trading organizations, and he asked that we call to his attention any improvement which we believed could be instituted in the occupation. He emphasized that his door was always open to our organization and that he would welcome any and all constructive suggestions we might have to make and he would listen to whatever grievances we might feel were legitimate and required redress. These were not empty words for it is not within the General's character to speak aimlessly or to make assurances and promises that are not kept.

In return, I pledged again, on behalf of our organization, our unqualified support of the occupation and went beyond the negative assurance that we would do nothing to obstruct the working out of our national will here in this occupied land by reaffirming that we would subordinate our ambitions as business men to the greater call of our primary duties as citizens of the United States. I said that although distinct from, we did not stand in opposition to SCAP. I felt sure that, in view of the atmosphere of willing cooperation which pervades the office of General Marquat, the occasion would rarely, if ever, arise where in we would be forced to bring major points of contention before him. The philosopher Aristotle observed that once two rational

men of goodwill understand each other's terms, there could never be any argument. It is not the intention of this Chamber to be involved in squabbles, bickerings or quarrels and there exists no reason to suppose that we will ever engage in them.

The General spoke freely on the subject of Asia as an economic unit. Basically, the Japanese had a sound idea in their "greater Asia prosperity sphere", for Asia will stand or fall, economically, as a unit. But the Japanese went about it in the wrong way. They tried to gorge themselves, and themselves alone, on the riches of Asia and we are witnessing today the price they are paying for their errors in judgment and their false doctrines of the past.

The General said the Chamber could help him in various Asiatic countries such as the Philippines and Shanghai where there has been considerable resistance to the buying of Japanese goods. This resistance is not based on a foundation of the thinking of the masses. In many cases it is simply a tired political football which grows soggy and more deflated each day through prolonged and kicking about in the field of international relations. The General feels that some of our members, carrying fat satchels full of facts and figures and blest with a certain amount of eloquence, could visit other Chambers of Commerce such as Manila and Shanghai and help SCAP a great deal through aiding to overcome this resistance to Japanese goods. Needless to say, we would thus be helping ourselves for with the expansion of Japanese trade abroad, there will be a lessening of the tax burden which our companies and we as individuals are called upon to pay to the Treasury of the United States.

The General then spoke at some length on the international situation and gave his usually brilliant performance of analysis and exposition. Rather than run the risk of repeating that which he would not want quoted, and rather than spoil the show when the General appears before us and gives this same analysis in his own words, I trust you will bear with me if we skip this part of our conversation.

General Marquat has extended to us the same welcome and has gone so far as to say that he will give us a conference room in the Hotel Tokyo, provide catering services, and do everything in his power to help us. I spoke to him in an indirect fashion on the subject of our being beholden to the Army and that it was not the desire of any member of this Chamber to be in a position where we would be using our status as Americans to obtain advantages denied the peoples of other nationalities. We would rather be on our own. He agreed to aid us in attaining this objective and extended us a most cordial invitation to bring to his desk specific recommendations for improvement in the ESS Section.

These, then, are the receptions which both General MacArthur and General Marquat have given our organization, and I feel we have reason to be thankful for they speak well for the future. The rest is now up to us.

In the few days since our last meeting the officers and board of governors have held several meetings. We have drawn up a working program, not up committees, defined their functions, and, in general, we have been getting things off the ground. I think if we carry out the plans of these committees the formation of this Chamber will be fully justified and we will be an active, powerful force for the good.