PROLOGUE

Four years and seven months ago, the author of the Congressional Front made a brief and slightly whimsical speech on the floor of Congress in connection with a bill reported from the Committee on Foreign Affairs for indemnifying a citizen of China. That speech was made on February 17, 1937. In it, the author suggested a certain course of action with respect to our military forces in China. We hope this two-act portrayal may prove of interest. The speech and what followed is herewith reproduced.

ACT I. THE SPEECH. "LI PO - TIEN."

Mr. Dirksen. Mr. Speaker, one of the bills reported by the Foreign Affairs Committee is of rare interest and raises an important collateral question. I refer to H. R. 2915, recommending payment of $300 to one Li Potien, a native of China. Had the report been written in breezy journalese it would probably read something like this: Li Potien is an olive-skinned oriental charmer who lives in Tientsin, China. Li operates a restaurant and bar. There she dispenses food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty. Li must be a discerning creature, because she soon learned the Yankee art of extending credit. Now, even in far-off China, one cannot indulge so superb a Yankee custom as meat and drink on the installment plan without attracting Yankee customers. And so it came about that members of the United States Marine Corps became customers of quaint little Li.

"One such customer was Pvt. Anthony R. Togil, private in the United States Marine Corps. We shall call him Tony for short. Tony wandered into Li's emporium shortly after midnight on January 3, 1929. It may be that Tony still believed it was New Year's eve. Maybe not. In any event Tony was feeling playful. Playfulness on the part of a fighting marine may have cannotations other than those ordinarily associated with the word. In any event Tony's playfulness took the form of a one-man offensive. The record indicates that Tony took out a knife. Probably he made a resounding speech and challenged all China to battle. He, peradventure, dared the shades of all the shoguns and shamans of that illustrious country. Perhaps he even challenged the household gods of the land of lotus and cherry blossoms. Then Tony went to work.

"The record discloses that Tony cut Li about the hands. He cut her about the arms. He cut her about the back. He cut her about the chest. He cut her about the face. We assume that Tony wounded her feelings. On that point the prosaic record is silent. It was a vigorous offensive, to say the least, whereafter it became necessary to take Li to the hospital for sundry repairs. Tony meanwhile was apprehended and brought before a general court martial and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. If there has been neither pardon nor reprieve, Tony is probably still in prison meditating on things occult and oriental.

"Li came back from hospital restored to body and spirit and no doubt resumed the time-honored custom of permitting the good folks to share her generous hospitality and pay later. Li probably took inventory after the inevitable hospital bill was presented, and concluded that

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the great and wealthy occidental country that parked Tony in Tientsin ought to assuage her wounded pocketbook. The repairs to Li's face and figure had cost $54. So Li rendered her bill in in true Yankee fashion. The claim was investigated by a United States naval board. They decided that, as a matter of simple justice, without acknowledging any liability, Li should receive some compensation, and so today we are considering that matter in Congress in the form of H.R. 2915, which provides $300 to assuage Li's wounded feelings and reimburse her for the hospital expense. It is more than 8 years since Tony licked a Chinese lady, and unless the fates intervene, there may be rejoicing in the house of Li as some official of this Government bears to Li a check for $300. On that day probably all of Li's customers will be treated to roast little pig and extra rice and tea as Li praises the greatness, the goodness, and the generosity of the land to the west where the sun sets.

"The point to this incident, however, is this: What was Tony doing over there? Why have him in China? Why have any troops in China? If they serve no useful or necessary purpose, why not withdraw them from China and avoid these petty frictions that may one day cause us trouble? To revise an old adage, great wars from little frictions spring, and these frictions can be avoided by withdrawing those troops.

"I am informed that today we have approximately 2,306 American soldiers in China. Of this number, 696 are with the Army and 1,110 with the marines. They were stationed there 36 years ago under the provisions of a treaty of 1901. Ostensibly it was an arrangement with other nations to guard the international railroad. The original reason for maintaining them in China has no doubt disappeared and today they are there because they were there. They are like the "wet paint" sentry of Queen Victoria's time. Her Majesty was coming down a freshly painted staircase one day and her imperial wrap brushed against the paint. She insisted on having a sentry placed at the turn in the staircase so it would not happen again. The paint dried soon after, but the sentry remained for 16 years. Is it not time in the interest of preserving peace that we take a direct step toward avoiding such provocations as this by withdrawing our troops from China?

"Just what could 2,306 American soldiers do if John Chinaman was really aroused? Our whole contingent of troops in China could easily be packed in this House Chamber. To say that they are guarding our interests in China is hardly persuasive. Good will alone will guard our interests; and if that fails, 2,306 soldiers stationed 7,000 or 8,000 miles from home would be of little consequence. To preserve that good will against the petty, irking provocations which may some day destroy it, we better instruct our soldiers to break camp and come back home."

ACT II. AT LONG LAST

Quotation from the Washington Daily News, dated November 15, 1941: "President Roosevelt said yesterday that the United States would withdraw its 970 marines now stationed in China, including leathernecks now stationed in Shanghai, Peiping, and Tientsin. Other reports stated this move was to clear decks for any Far East eventuality."