

CARLOS ROMULO

BY SERGE FLIEGERS

THE President of the United Nations General Assembly stands five feet four inches with his shoes on. His diminutive stature and his high position have made Carlos P. Romulo an easy target for personal gibes.

Reports of American troop landings on Leyte described General MacArthur as wading ashore through waist-deep surf with Brigadier-General Romulo at his side. Walter Winchell immediately called a war correspondent to ask how Carlos Romulo could have waded through water that deep — without drowning.

At a recent UN conference in Paris, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Vishinsky shouted of Romulo, "This little man with the big, big voice, who spreads noise wherever he goes!"

Romulo, undaunted, got up and popped back, "I may be small, but I am like David, slinging the pebbles of truth between the eyes of blustering Goliaths."

This was no idle boast, because he comes of fighting stock and his courage in attacking formidable opposition

is renowned. His father, Gregorio Romulo, who later became Governor of the rich Tarlac province, was a famous guerrilla leader in the revolt against American occupation of the Philippines fifty years ago.

Carlos Romulo's fighting spirit was profoundly aroused while he was studying at Columbia University, where he received his master's degree in 1921. He would take long walks through nearby Harlem, and here he came up against the problem of racial discrimination. Certain restaurants refused to serve Filipinos. Romulo has been an angry defender of minority groups ever since.

Although he returned to Manila University as a professor of literature, he soon felt that he needed a larger forum than the classroom. He decided to become a newspaperman. Within three years he had risen from cub reporter to the editorship of Manila's powerful T.V.T. publications, which issue daily newspapers in English, Spanish, and Tagalog.

Romulo then entered Philippine

SERGE FLIEGERS, whose profile of Andrei Gromyko appeared in the September 1949 AMERICAN MERCURY, is a UN correspondent who is also the editor of the Inter Continental Press.

politics, and later was secretary to President Manuel Quezon. As he himself modestly explains, "Every time I had an ambition — teaching, politics, soldiering, or diplomacy — I would achieve it within a few years. Then I would have to look for another ambition."

Anything but self-effacing, he denies that he is conceited because he has no time for conceit. Nervous, tense, and concentrated in everything he does, he is nevertheless a devoted family man. He commutes weekly between Washington, where three of his four sons are in school, and New York, where he has offices as Philippine Ambassador and Chief Delegate to the UN. This does not leave him much leisure.

"When I was in high school," he recalls, "I used to play shortstop for our baseball team. But even then they used to say that I was more short than stop. In my youth I played a mean game of tennis and went in for fencing. Today, the only fencing I do is with words, across conference tables. Sometimes I get other exercise from gardening or dancing with my wife. When we have a spare moment, we put on a record and dash off a tango."

It was at a dance that Romulo met his wife. He married her not long after they were crowned King and Queen of a Manila carnival. Mrs. Romulo is pretty, but she keeps in the

background. On a recent trip to the Philippines, however, she did make one public appearance. This was to speak before a college for women in Manila. She explained: "There are three kinds of wives — the one who outshines her husband; the one who shines with her husband; and the one who glows faintly in her husband's shadow. I prefer belonging to the third category."

Her husband's reputation as a speaker and *raconteur* is well-established. Once when Notre Dame University was conferring upon him an honorary LL.D., he preceded President Roosevelt on the platform and delivered a brilliant speech. The applause was an ovation. As he turned away from the speaker's stand, FDR stopped him with the good-natured quip: "Rommy, you have stolen the show from the President of the United States."

Once when Romulo returned from a lecture tour which took him to more than 400 cities and towns in all 48 States of the Union, his eldest son, Carlos, Jr., now a law student in Manila, looked over the enthusiastic press-clippings and wise-cracked: "Pop, if you were to run for President of the Philippines, you'd win for sure — if they'd hold the election in the United States!"

Although at the age of 49 Romulo has had a series of successful careers

that might satisfy any four ordinary men, the UN president's ambition is undiminished. He admits that he would like some day to be President of the Philippines. If the corps of UN news correspondents had the deciding vote, his election would be assured. He has promised them a free plane trip to Manila if he should ever be elected. Newsmen write of the cocky little diplomat with tones ranging from genuine admiration to cynical disdain for his "spotlight grabbing." However, they have consistently given him the best press that any UN delegate has ever received, not even excluding Mrs. Roosevelt.

II

Long before Pearl Harbor, Carlos Romulo had been waging a one-man campaign against Japan. Early in 1941, after a tour of the Far East, he wrote a series of newspaper articles begging America to take preventive action against Japanese imperialism. He predicted a Japanese attack late that year. His warnings went unheeded.

Several months after America's ultimate entry into the war, Romulo was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for these newspaper stories he had written forecasting Japanese intentions. General MacArthur in person brought him the news of the award. The honor left Romulo incredulous. He stam-

pered, "General you are pulling my leg!"

MacArthur smiled. "Carlos, do I *generally* pull legs?"

The close friendship between General MacArthur and the man who served as his aide-de-camp has sometimes been misinterpreted. MacArthur, never noted for the warmth of his relationships, actually has a deep affection for "little Carlos." As for Romulo, his admiration and loyalty have never wavered, even though his ideas are much more liberal than those attributed to his towering friend.

Thus when news of the Pearl Harbor attack was flashed to Romulo's Manila newspaper office, his first act was to fling on his reserve officer's uniform and hurry to MacArthur's headquarters. When he reported breathlessly for his first assignment of the war, the General laid a hand on his shoulder. "Carlos, we don't want an upside-down Major in our army," he said unpinning the shoulder insignia. Romulo was chagrined to see that in his haste he had fastened his major's leaves on wrong way up.

He soon proved that he was fully right-side-up as a fighting man. His promotions were won under fire. He stayed in the hell of Bataan until the last day before surrender, and left only after MacArthur had strictly ordered him to do so. The plane in which he

was flown out was a makeshift which his men had assembled from several wrecks fished out of the bay.

One of the less amiable anecdotes told of MacArthur and Romulo is an apocryphal story of how the latter won his Purple Heart decoration. It was said that Romulo was in his tent shaving one morning, when there was a bombing raid on the camp. Although the bombs fell some distance away, he nicked himself with the razor, and had to apply adhesive tape to the cut. That same morning at a staff meeting, the General, it is alleged, asked about this injury. When the Filipino aide-de-camp began to explain, "Well, this morning, while the bombing was ——" MacArthur is supposed to have interrupted, "Aha! Wounded in action! Put him down for a Purple Heart!"

The true story is that Romulo was talking to an American soldier on the outskirts of the camp when a Japanese plane dove straight at them and dropped a bomb. The other man was killed outright, and Romulo suffered head-wounds and shock. Nevertheless, he has always been shy about wearing his Purple Heart ribbon.

Romulo's battles were not over when the Japanese had been defeated. He threw himself into the fight to build an independent democracy out of the political shambles the enemy had left in the Philippines. He re-

marked, "Liberation is not a process of flying flags and firing triumphant guns. People are set free, but for what purpose?"

A virulent hatred of Europeans and Americans had been strongly implanted by the Japanese. Romulo set himself to the formidable task of ending this. He pleaded, in speeches, for closer cooperation with the United States. Soon his opponents were accusing him of being a stooge of the American State Department and the tool of Wall Street.

He ignored his critics by putting to a practical test his theory that hunger and disease breed hate and totalitarianism, and that food, and clothing are effective antidotes against dictatorship. The little man with the big, big voice was made Philippine Representative to the United States Congress, and he hurried to Washington with this plea.

"Without help from Mother America, the Filipino might find himself set free — to die!" he cried.

Romulo tells a poignant incident to illustrate the psychology of those crucial days just before the Philippine liberation. He was tucking his small son Bobby into the first real bed the child had ever known. Since babyhood Bobby had lived in the wild hills, hiding with his mother. "This is wonderful," the little boy sighed, snuggling under the covers. "Yes, a

bed is wonderful," his father agreed. The six-year-old regarded him gravely, "I don't mean the bed. I mean knowing that when I wake up in the morning, I'll still be here."

Romulo's efforts to get American help met with success. The last conference of President Roosevelt's life was with Philippine President Osmena to discuss Romulo's plea for aid. One week later, Roosevelt died — on the day he dictated a memorandum urging help for the Philippines.

Today, there is no longer any question in the minds of Filipinos as to the country to which Romulo pays allegiance. His first loyalty is to his native land, then to democracy, and finally to a free world in which all peoples may have an equal opportunity for happiness.

III

A significant detail about Romulo's suite of offices on the United Nations floor of the Empire State Building is that it is the only one which has a front-door mat lettered with a large "Welcome." Nowadays, he is looking for similar "Welcome" mats at the doorways of the world's major ministries of foreign affairs. He needs all the friends he can get for the biggest fight of his career. The responsibility has fallen on him almost alone to bring to life and defend his thesis for Union in Asia and the Pacific.

This thesis first took shape when Romulo arrived at the New Delhi conference called by Indian Premier Nehru in January 1949. For some time Nehru had been considering a way to unite the people of Asia. His idea was that such a Union would be a ponderous "Third Force" in the world which, as he expressed it, "would not inherit the quarrels of the East or the West."

Romulo pushed through a unanimous resolution providing for a continuing mechanism of consultation between the nations of the Far East. But he realized that such a loose mechanism was not enough to cope with problems that were piling up on the oriental horizon. In a detailed report to his boss, President Quirino, Romulo set out his ideas: Let us call a conference, early next year, of the major Asiatic and Pacific countries: Pakistan, India, Burma, Ceylon, Siam, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, French Indo-China and possibly Korea and democratic China. Let us ask them to form an organization so that, together, they can strive for better living conditions and better understanding. Let us have Union and let us have strength. That is the only way we can save ourselves from Communism.

Preoccupied with a coming election, Quirino at first paid scant attention to Romulo's plan. It might still

be gathering dust in the Presidential files, had Quirino not remembered, at the last minute, an old political maneuver: What a President needs for re-election is a dramatic stroke in international affairs.

Digging out Romulo's memorandum, he found it no mere report but a blueprint for Asia's salvation. He called it "Plan for Pacific Union." This nearly fell apart when Chiang Kai-shek pounced upon it and tried to take it over during a dramatic weekend visit to Manila. Together with Korean right-wing President Syngman Rhee, Chiang had already planned a conference in Seoul for an all-Asia help organization — which would help them reconquer their own territory.

Liberals in the Philippines and all over the world set up a howl of protest. When Romulo, hurriedly recalled to straighten out the mess, arrived at Manila's International airport, he was met by a crowd carrying placards bearing such slogans as: "Hands off Chiang and corruption," and "Dr. Romulo, your Pacific Union is bad for us, good for others."

Romulo faced the problem with characteristic directness. He stepped up to the first picket, smiled, extended his hand, chirped: "Hiya, Tommy, how've you been?" The picket, one of his ex-students, first scowled, then an answering smile

broke through on his face. Excitedly, he dropped the sign to shake hands with his former professor. Romulo went right down the line, until he had "disarmed" the last picket.

He still had to placate the anti-Chiang forces. For eleven days he retired to the family plantation, then emerged with a simple solution: "Let us change the name of our proposed organization from 'Pacific Union' to 'Southeast Asia Union.'" With one geo-political stroke, he had slashed off China and Korea, too far north to be included in the new delineation.

Forty-eight hours after Romulo's announcement, American Secretary of State Acheson came out with a denunciation of Chiang and his associates. Any Union counting Chiang among its members would therefore have had the automatic "kiss of death" from Washington. Thus Romulo, who had originally been content to submit his plan for Union in the Pacific to the President of his country, and wait for collective action to take place, was forced to take the foreground and make a personal fight for it.

Romulo explained his strategy as follows: "If there is to be any successful Union, it must be non-military and non-Communist — but not anti-Communist. The present danger in Asia can be met by other than military, aggressive means. The greatest

danger to democracy comes from within a nation. No country has ever been lost to democracy that hasn't first been poverty-ridden and graft-ridden. I want to emphasize that the Union should not be military, but cooperative within the economic and cultural spheres."

Romulo made no direct reference to Communist China in this respect. But he feels that, although China's two leaders Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai are at present strictly following Moscow lines, they might conceivably be forced to "pull a Tito." China is a tremendous country, its people easy-going and traditionally individualistic. Their civilization is mellow, and cannot be successfully cast into the iron mould of Communist ideology. Perhaps a successful Union of Southeast Asia might present the only way to reclaim some 400 million people lost to the ways of democracy through democracy's own bungling and inertia.

Romulo thinks it can be done, without arms, for he is a great believer in a war of words rather than a war of swords.

He expressed this idea forcefully in his most successful speech, made to the opening session of the United Nations conference in San Francisco, when he said: "Words and ideas are more powerful than guns in the defense of human dignity. Treaties are stronger than armed bound-

aries. The only impregnable line is that of human understanding."

Even Vyacheslav Molotov, who was presiding, was impressed. He stood up from the President's chair above the speaker's rostrum and leaned down to shake Romulo's hand. He mustered his meager knowledge of English and beamed "Aksalant!" But, perhaps prophetically, the two statesmen's hands didn't touch. Romulo was too short to reach all the way up, and five foot five Molotov was too short to reach all the way down. In his polite effort he nearly toppled over, and Pavlov, his interpreter, had to grab the august coat-tails in order to prevent his chief from falling flat on his face at the feet of Romulo.

Usually, Soviets are not in danger of falling flat on their faces before Romulo. They recognize in him a fighter, and side with him when he lashes out at imperialist nations such as Great Britain, France, Belgium and Holland. But they side against him with equal vehemence when he demands freedom of information or a charter of human rights.

During the Paris UN meeting, where Romulo did a remarkable job as chairman of a catch-all committee saddled with the conference's most ticklish problem, he was honored at a luncheon in the sumptuous Soviet Embassy on the Rue de Grenelle. When toasting-time came, Vishinsky

proposed: "To Ambassador Romulo, the foremost orator in the United Nations, whose eloquence is so consuming that it sometimes consumes the orator himself."

Romulo chose not to recognize the thinly-veiled barb. He drew himself to his full height — reaching just about elbow level with his host — looked squarely at him, coldly proposed: "To the great heroic Russian people . . ." and sat down.

Even though Romulo disavows any intention of getting his Union into a fight with the Russians or any other enemies, it seems that he might have to fight his friends in order to make them see light.

IV

It is a curiously assorted team that follows Romulo on his path towards the Southeast Asia Union. Politically and culturally, there is no homogeneity. Three of the countries are Christian, three are Buddhist, two are Moslem and one is Hindu. Their people speak numberless languages, their traditions present a pattern of bewildering variety. And each country has its own problems.

India, the largest in area and population, also has the longest and most-difficult-to-guard frontier with the Soviet Union. It therefore wants to remain very much astride any problem the Union might have to face.

Indian Premier Nehru still toys with his "Third Force" plan which would make a dead weight of the Union. But his recent visit to Washington for conversations covering financial, technical and other help the United States can give India may have helped change Nehru's mind.

Australia, the next most powerful country included in Romulo's plan wants to start with a Union of Pacific Commonwealth nations, armed by Britain. The two Moslem countries, Pakistan and Indonesia, feel they are too much preoccupied with their internal problems to bother with Pacific get-togethers.

Other representation at his proposed conference poses one more thorny problem for Romulo. Should he invite representatives of the colonial territories such as Indo-China and Malaya? Their seething nationalism presents an easy prey for Communism, and Romulo feels he should invite the spokesmen of their people rather than representatives of the metropolitan power that rules them.

It is the smaller countries of the Pacific who have been most enthusiastic. The Premiers of Siam and Burma, kindly Peter Fraser of New Zealand, and Syngman Rhee of Korea, were so taken by Romulo's plan that they started an epidemic of Pacific conferences. In addition to Romulo's proposed meeting in the

Philippines and one that Australia's Evatt wants to call early next year, hotel rooms are also being prepared in Seoul, Bangkok and Rangoon for possible Union meetings.

Of all these, Romulo's conference stands the most chance of success. One reason is that during the last month, he acquired American support for his plan. Up to then, our policy in the Pacific had become muddled as a result of the China incident.

Our line of defense there first was along China's Yangtze River. General Marshall abandoned that and fixed it along the thirty-eighth parallel, which divided Korea into spheres of Soviet and American influence. With the withdrawal of American troops from Korea, our line retreated and lengthened, stretching now along Japan, Okinawa, the Philippines, Australia and bomber-vulnerable Alaska. Latest reports showed that even this line was crumbling, with the dismantling of our naval base at Samar, in the Philippines.

Now President Truman has decided to hold the line, and possibly even advance it. In a recent interview with Philippine President Quirino, our Chief Executive announced: "The United States will lend all feasible assistance to the countries of Asia in their effort to protect themselves against the Communist menace."

In the meanwhile, our Far East

planners, Assistant Secretary of State W. W. Butterworth and Roving Ambassador Phillip Jessup (a personal friend of Carlos Romulo's) are understood to be doing under-cover work for the Southeast Asia Union. At the Washington Dollar conferences with Britain they touched upon that subject.

Bevin's position, up to now, has been shrouded in a fog of British diplomacy. With Malaya and Hong Kong just one short, dangerous hop away from Communist China, the British have refused to come out into the open with their attitude regarding a Far East Union or alliance. Latest London reports also show Whitehall worried about the fact that the United States might use a Southeast Asia Union to build a "Dollar Empire" in the Pacific.

Presented with all these conflicting tendencies, this international patchwork of power politics, Romulo does not give up hope. The easiest task will be to make his fellow-Asiatics realize the urgency of common action. It will be more difficult to convince them that arms and aggressive military alliances are not necessary — and might even be dangerous — in attaining their goal of mutual security. But his most difficult task will be to convert the heterogeneous mass that now is Asia into a strong, clean-functioning mechanism for peace.

THE SKEPTICS' CORNER

by BERGEN EVANS



That fish fall from the sky

Small collections of fish have sometimes been found in city streets after an unusually heavy shower and the find always serves as confirmation of the widespread belief that fish occasionally come down from the sky, it being argued that in these instances they could have come from nowhere else.

A more probable explanation is that they have been flooded out of a sewer. Modern cities cover many square miles, areas that almost invariably include a number of small streams. As the city grows, these streams are generally enclosed in sewers through which, unknown to the manswarm above, they continue to flow most dismally. Yet they are still streams. They have their bright headwaters and sedgy upper reaches where frogs and minnows live their natural lives until perchance a cloud-burst sweeps them down under the city's streets and gushes them out of a

sewer to amaze astrologers, some zoologists, journalists and other dabblers in the occult.

Visitors to London may have noticed an immense iron pipe running diagonally through the Sloan Square Underground Station, between the track and the ceiling, without ever guessing that it enclosed the Westbourne, one of London's rivers.

That the human eye overawes the "lower" animals who avert their gaze and slink away abashed when God's image confronts them with a fixed regard

The usual proof of this belief is to glower at a lion in the zoo until such time as the bored beast yawns and looks elsewhere. If its rationale were valid, the lower in the scale the more the creature ought to be overawed, but it doesn't seem to work that way. You may fix a mosquito with a glare of stern disapproval and find him no whit abashed. Even King James I,