

A BRIEF BUT TRAGIC SESSION

By Our Special Correspondent

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tunity to explain the correct position in the House.

More than these, the session would be regarded memorable by the Rajya Sabha members in that they adopted revised rules of procedure which would give them greater opportunities, very nearly on a par with Lok Sabha members for raising discussions and calling the attention of the Government to matters of urgent importance. The question-hour will be there for one more day—Friday—hereafter. The debate on this subject was not confined to the Rules sought to be revised. It covered much wider ground.

As usual, the Communist leader, Mr. Bhupesh Gupta, became the dominant speaker, taking the floor for a much longer time than any other. He brought in matters, which other members called irrelevant to the subject under discussion. But he was undeterred. One point he made was that the Deputy Chairman should be chosen from the Opposition. He quoted practices in certain State legislatures and Western countries in his favour. His grievance on this score is not something new. Even when the present Deputy Chairman was elected two years back, he made the same point and urged that the Opposition should at least be consulted before the choice was made.

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN'S POST

Speeches made by members of the ruling party showed that they were in no mood to let go this office to the Opposition. While rejecting this suggestion, Mr. M. Govinda Reddy, who piloted the revised rules for adoption, made certain unsavoury observations on the Opposition parties. Curiously, these went unchallenged. He said that the ruling party could not concede this office to the Opposition "until such time as the Opposition attains to a level of decent, gentlemanly behaviour with the Government." He pointed to the "behaviour of the Opposition members in the joint session" and said that, if this was the characteristic behaviour of the Opposition, then they might obstruct the proceedings of the House, if the post of Deputy Chairman was placed in their hands.

After making these observations, Mr. Reddy added that he did not mean to say that all the Opposition members were like that. It was not clear as to why he should have generalised on the basis of a few exceptions.

The passage of the controversial Constitution (Seventeenth) Amendment Bill in the Upper House was bereft of any excitement. The measure encountered little resistance, because the only opponent to it—the Swatantra Party—had hardly seven members present in the House to vote against it. Unlike as in the Lok Sabha, the Swatantra members did not walk out at any stage, but allowed it to be passed with an overwhelming majority. The debate for the most part turned out to be a duel between the Swatantra and the Communist groups.

THE briefest session of Parliament, which came to be also the saddest ever to be held owing to the passing away of that prince among parliamentarians, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, ended last week. Parliament will meet again on September 7. But no more will one see the figure of the greatest Indian parliamentarian floating as it were into the House, bowing gracefully to the Chair and taking his seat in a corner to the right of the Speaker reserved for the leader, where others now tremble to sit, Parliament without Nehru is unimaginable, but that has got to be now. What a unique leader he was, loved and respected by both sides of the House.

NEHRU'S COURTESY TO THE OPPOSITION

The visitors' galleries were always crowded when he spoke and the Press Gallery overflowed with journalists from all over the world, leaning over each other's shoulder, whenever he made an important policy statement. They all came to hear him and they all know there cannot be another like him for many decades to come. The glowing, moving and spontaneous tributes paid to Mr. Nehru by members from all parties in both the Houses, the undisguised and even uncontrollable tears that flowed from the eyes of Congress and Opposition members alike, who were all left stunned for some time after the news of the tragedy was given in the House, bear eloquent testimony to the greatest democrat. To the members of his own party he provided an inspiring leadership, and to those in the Opposition he was ever courteous and ready to provide information. Despite a steam-roller majority behind him, he set up a tradition of "stooping to conquer".

Even in this brief special session, one had an idea of what Parliament would be without Mr. Nehru. The question-hour on foreign

affairs, popularly known as the "Prime Minister's Day", also seemed to have lost its life. Active Opposition members said that they did not feel like putting any supplementaries. The man with whom they could happily cross swords on the floor of the House, without once being hit below the belt, was not there. Many felt sad that one who could forget and forgive as quickly as he could flare up in a heated exchange of arguments, was not there to enliven them in the question-hour.

No wonder that Mr. G. L. Nanda who took over as Prime Minister, approached the favourite seat of Mr. Nehru hesitantly, stood for a few minutes near it visibly trembling, before he sat down. The debate on the Constitution (Seventeenth Amendment) Bill for which the session had been specially summoned became a mere formality, with the non-Communist Opposition reluctant to wage a battle royal in the shadow of the national calamity. But the Congress members were glued to their seats this time because of division at every stage. This time Congressmen were careful about guarding the prestige of the Party and the Bill was passed by an overwhelming majority.

GOLD CONTROL UNDER FIRE

The Kashmir issue and the talks with Sheikh Abdullah for discussing which the session, it was freely whispered, was summoned became for the present a forgotten question. But discussions on the Gold Control were lively on the last day of the Lok Sabha when the House debated a motion to refer to a Joint Select Committee a Bill seeking to put Gold Control on the statute book.

The bitter criticism voiced not only from all sections of the Opposition but also from the Congress benches is an indication that the measure will face extremely rough weather when it comes up again before a House without Nehru. By a curious coincidence, the Gold Control Bill was being

debated at a time when its author, Mr. Morarji Desai's candidature for leadership of the Congress Parliamentary Party was the main theme of discussion in the Central Hall.

In the Upper House, the opening day was the "Prime Minister's Day" and the members, who were eagerly looking for Mr. Nehru to walk in, heard instead the tragic news of his illness and his passing away. They became speechless and dispersed to meet a day later to give expression to their feelings. A week after that, the "Prime Minister's Day" came again and by this time, the members had, with difficulty, reconciled themselves to the stark reality of a House without Nehru. They cheered Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri as he walked in and took his seat.

The Laotian situation and allegations made about a Central Minister by a ruling party member dominated the first question hour in the House which Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri attended as Prime-Minister-Designate. The way he deftly handled these questions left a good impression on the members.

CHARGES AGAINST MRS. SINHA

Later in the week, it was the charges against the Deputy Finance Minister that created quite a stir more outside in the lobbies than inside the chamber. There was a question on this subject and the Prime Minister, Mr. Nanda, gave the House information about the opinion expressed by the Attorney-General.

In the course of his replies to supplementary questions, he said that Mrs. Tarakeshwari Sinha had been given an opportunity to look into the complaints and give her explanation. Mrs. Sinha was not present in the House at that time. She disputed the facts and gave open expression to her grievance in the lobbies by having a wordy duel with Mr. Jaisukhlal Hathi. Many members in the House referred to this the next day and felt she should have sought an oppor-

PHOUMA HALTS U.S. FLIGHTS OVER LAOS

RIGHTISTS MAY OPPOSE MOVE

VIENTIANE, June 10. The neutralist Premier, Prince Souvanna Phouma to-day stopped U.S. military reconnaissance flights over Laos.

Observers fear his action may precipitate another coup by Right wing generals who advocate a tough line against the pro-Communist Pathet Lao.

The Prince said he had not proposed that armed U.S. jets—flying from an aircraft carrier lying off Laos—should escort unarmed reconnaissance planes flying over the Pathet Lao-held Plain of Jars. He said he had proposed that Laotian fighters hold escort reconnaissance flights, and U.S. flights would stop to-day.

U.S. OFFICIALS SHOCKED

The decision came as a shock to U.S. Embassy officials here with Mr. Leonard Unger, the Ambassador, saying he did not think the flights had yet served their purpose.

The Soviet Charge D'affaires, Mr. Vassily Tchivilev, conferred with Prince Souvanna yesterday. There were also hurried consultations between Mr. Unger and the British Charge D'affaires, Mr. John Benson.

General Phoumi Nosavan, the right-wing leader, was seen walking angrily out of the conference room after the meeting. Diplomatic observers believed Prince Souvanna was stopping the U.S. flights because he was afraid the war in Laos would turn into a Korea-type conflict.

CHINESE ALLEGE U.S. BOMBING

United States jet fighters yesterday again "bombed and strafed" the pro-Communist areas of Khang Hai and Phong Savang in the Jeng Khouang province of Laos, the new China News Agency reported.

The Agency said that six U.S. jet fighters dropped 12 bombs and fired two rockets on the town of Hong Savang. Anti-aircraft units of the Neo Lao Haksat fighting units opened fire and damaged two U.S. planes.

U.K. SUPPORTS U.S. ACTION

The British Government has expressed its understanding of U.S. strikes on the positions of Pathet Lao forces.

A Foreign Office statement in London said that official confirmation of the American intervention

TEL BRIEF

MOSCOW: Soviet woman cosmonaut, Mrs. Valentina Tereshkova, gave birth to a daughter on Monday.

LONDON: West Germany has agreed to pay Britain one million pounds to compensate certain British victims of Nazi persecution.

KANSAS CITY: George John Gessner, 28, a nuclear weapons Engineer, was sentenced to life imprisonment on June 9, after being found guilty of giving military secrets to Russian agents.

LONDON: Britain's one-year-old Siamese twin girls joined at the head were separated on Monday after surgery lasting all day, but one of them died 30 minutes later. A statement from St. Bartholomew's Hospital after the operation said the long term outlook for the surviving child seemed excellent, but the post-operative period might not be altogether smooth.

MIXED NUCLEAR FORCE

BRITAIN NOT COMMITTED

LONDON, June 10. Sir Alec Douglas-Home said yesterday that Britain was not committed to the proposed mixed nuclear force.

In the House of Commons, Mr. Fred Mulley, a Labour spokesman on naval affairs said there was a danger that putting forward alternative proposals for a multilateral nuclear force within the NATO study group implied that the Government accepted the principle.

Mr. Mulley was taken to be referring to British ideas for extending the original American proposal for a mixed-manned Polaris fleet to tactical and other deterrents such as bomber and missile crews.

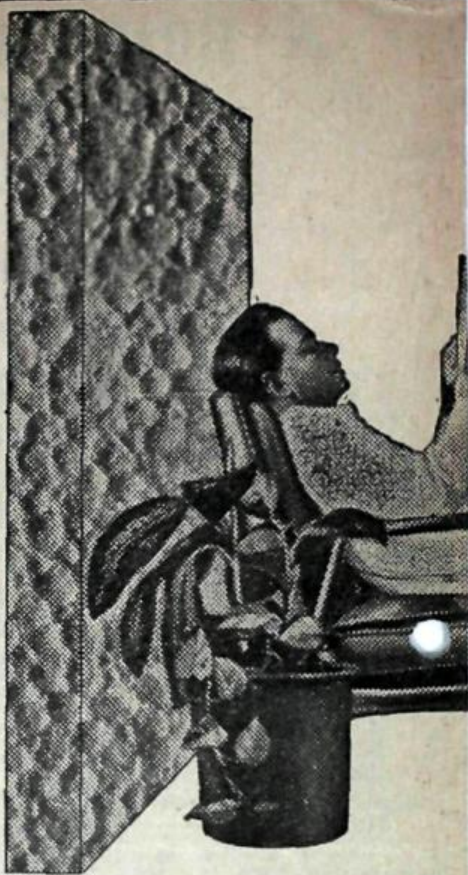
The Prime Minister replied: "No. There is no commitment. I do not think putting forward possible alternatives implies that we accept the principle. There was a lot to be said on the political argument in favour of this force," he said.

PREMIER SMITH CROWDED OUT

EXPLANATION BY HOME

LONDON, June 9. Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas-Home said to-day that next month's Commonwealth meeting will be too crowded to accommodate Prime

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