

L.O. No. 49

THE BOMB INCIDENT



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

June, 1958

P R E F A C E

Many a book has been written in England about Guy Fawkes and his attempt to blow up the British Houses of Parliament on November 5th, 1605, the day on which James I was to open the Parliament. This incident known as the Gunpowder Plot is remembered today as a historical event and is even commemorated in England by bonfires and fireworks on the 5th of November every year. Its Parliamentary significance was that since that day in 1605 the vaults in the Houses of Parliament are always searched before the opening ceremony.

The bomb explosions in the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly in Delhi on the 8th April, 1929, is today a forgotten event of which there is no connected account in any book or publication. The incident itself was at the time no more than the rash act of two emotional youths who paid the price of their deed. But looking back at this distance of time the incident and its sequel constitute a landmark in the history of India's Parliament.

As a direct result of the incident came into being a Watch & Ward Establishment under the supreme control of the Speaker for the protection of the Legislative Chamber and its premises.

Incidentally as the explosions synchronised with the ruling by the President of the Legislative Assembly on the Public Safety Bill, the controversy that ensued between the Viceroy Lord Irwin and the President established for all time the convention that within the House it is the President (Speaker), subject only to the House itself, who is the sole and final authority under the rules and Standing Orders on all questions relating to order.

All that the Legislative Assembly Debate of the day mentions about the incident is:

“At this stage two bombs were thrown from the Visitors' Gallery, and burst among the Benches occupied by the Official Members, causing injury to certain Members. Confusion prevailed and Mr. President retired. After a few minutes, Mr. President resumed the Chair.”*

In view of its Parliamentary significance an attempt has been made in this brochure to reconstruct this historical event from the press reports of the day, certain contemporary documents and the eye-witness accounts of two officials of the old Legislative

*L.A. Deb. 1929, Vol. III, dated the 8th April, 1929, p. 2985.

(ii)

Assembly Department, who were specially requested to furnish the same recently in connection with this brochure.

The details of the event have been thoroughly sifted and whatever has been corroborated by more than one source has been incorporated in this publication.

The narrative of the incident and the connected events that followed have been written purely from the point of view of their Parliamentary significance.

In the form of appendices, the press reports in different newspapers of the day as also the eye-witness accounts of two officials of the old Legislative Assembly Department are reproduced.

At the end, a plan of the Chamber indicating the spots where the bombs fell and from where they were thrown has also been included in this brochure.

NEW DELHI;

Dated the 14th June, 1958.

M. N. KAUL,

Secretary.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. THE BOMBS	I
II. THE BACKGROUND	6
III. THE SEQUEL	11
IV. POST SCRIPT	19
V. APPENDICES:	
(A)—Press Reports	
(i) Associated Press of India	27
(ii) <i>The Hindustan Times</i>	30
(iii) <i>The Hindu</i>	35
(iv) <i>The Times of India</i>	38
(v) <i>The Statesman</i>	41
(vi) Statements and Press Comments	43
(B)—Eye-witness accounts from officials of the former Legislative Assembly Department—	
(i) Letter from Rai Bahadur D. Dutt (Retd. Assistant Secretary, Legislative Assembly Department)	49
(ii) Letter from Shri Bisheshwar Nath (Retd. Editor of Parliamen- tary Publications)	50
(C)—Lord Irwin's farewell speech at the Chelmsford Club	52
VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY	53
VII. CHAMBER SEATING PLAN	55

CHAPTER I

The Bombs

The galleries of the Legislative Assembly Chamber in Delhi were packed and overflowing with visitors on Monday, the 8th of April, 1929. The occasion was the expected ruling by the President, the Honourable Shri Vithalbhai Javerbhai Patel, on the controversial Public Safety Bill, which for weeks earlier had been agitating the public mind.

The proceedings began rather tamely for the day. There were only two questions orally answered and immediately thereafter the House took up the Third Reading of the Trade Disputes Bill. The speeches from the Congress and the Nationalist Benches were none too subdued in their opposition to the Bill. The well-known journalist, Shri C. S. Ranga Aiyar, a member of the Swaraj Party, characterized the Bill: "It is nothing short of strangling a child in its cradle; and, Sir, I charge the hon. the Labour Member with committing an act of that kind by bringing in legislation of this nature, strangling the young Trade Union movement."*

Speeches and interruptions gradually roused excitement in the House to fever pitch when at about 12.30 P.M. the President concluded the debate and put the question to the House, "That the Trade Disputes Bill, as amended by the Select Committee, be passed."† Thereupon challenges followed and the House divided. In spite of the solid phalanx of 41 nominated officials and non-officials in a House of 104 members, the Government could muster only a majority of 18 in favour of the Bill. Amidst cheers from the official benches and sullen chagrin of the Opposition the Bill was passed.

The House was settling down to hear the President's ruling on the Public Safety Bill and Sir John Simon, Chairman of the Indian Statutory Commission, had just entered the President's Gallery to hear the ruling personally, as it was well known, in view of the President's earlier advice to Government, that the ruling was going to be against the progress of the Public Safety Bill so long as the Meerut Conspiracy Case was pending.

At 12.35 P.M. in pindrop silence, in his wig and gown, the President rose and with his usual solemnity on such occasions began, "As the Trade Disputes Bill is now out of the way, I propose to give my ruling‡. . . .". Only thus far could he proceed with what was

*L.A. Deb. Vol. III, dated 8th April, 1929, p. 2973.

†L.A. Deb. Vol. III, dated 8th April, 1929, p. 2984.

‡L.A. Deb. Vol. III, dated 8th April, 1929, p. 2985.

known to the Press as a twelve page statement when the proceedings were abruptly interrupted by a loud explosion followed by yet another, accompanied by pistol shots and a bunch of pamphlets thrown into the Chamber.

The following is a connected account of the events that followed in bewildering succession after the first explosion took place. Just when President Patel rose to give his ruling, a bomb fell near Sir George Schuster's seat from the Visitors' Gallery to the right of the Chair. His seat was the fifth on the front Official Bench to the right of the Chair. This caused panic and a wild stampede ensued both among members in the Chamber and the visitors in the galleries. A second bomb was immediately thrown, this time on the back benches of the Treasury Block.

Along with the bombs leaflets were thrown from the Gallery into the Chamber. They were purported to be 'Notices' by the 'Hindustan Socialist Republican Army' and were signed by one Balraj, Commander-in-Chief.

The Chamber was filled with smoke and amidst the din and *melee* could be seen two self-composed young men in the Visitors' Gallery standing unaffected by the terror and turmoil around and below them.

After dropping the bombs one of them was reported to have fired two pistol shots in the air and thereafter threw his pistol on his seat. He was reported to have said—"I have done my duty to the country" and, turning to approaching policeman, added, "Look, here is my revolver". He was at once disarmed and arrested. His comrade also surrendered himself to a Police Sergeant without resistance.

Sir George Schuster, the Finance Member of the Government of India, and three other members of the House, namely, Sir Bomanji Dalal (Nominated non-official) and Messrs. Raghavendra Rau and Shankar Rau (Nominated officials) were injured. Mr. S. N. Roy, Deputy Secretary of the Indian Central Committee, who was sitting in the Officers' Gallery was hit by a piece of bomb. Sir George Schuster was wounded in the right arm. A splinter cut through his shirt and coat and caused a wound, though not deep. Sir Bomanji Dalal, known in his days as the most silent member of the House, who was sitting in the second back bench close to Sir George Schuster, was wounded in the right thigh. Evidently it was a large piece of metal which caused the wound right down to the muscles. His wound was rather more serious and his condition was at one time reported to be grave, though ultimately nothing untoward happened. Both his wound and that of Sir George Schuster were dressed by Col. Gidney (a nominated member of the House representing the Anglo-Indian and Domiciled European Community) and Dr. Reinhold, Civil Surgeon, Delhi, in the Finance Member's room. Thereafter Sir Bomanji Dalal was sent to hospital. Mr. S. N. Roy was hurt on two fingers of his right hand. The injuries of Mr. Raghavendra Rau and

Mr. Shankar Rau were slight. Many other members, it was reported, had a narrow escape.

Mr. K. C. Roy, Chief of the Associated Press of India and a nominated non-official member of the House, had a lucky escape as the official back bench on which he was sitting was ripped by the second bomb but luckily all the members had left immediately after the first explosion.

And where was the President amidst all the noise and scurry for cover? The Press reports of the day said nothing.

However, this is what Mr. D. Dutt, the Officer at the Table on that eventful day, had to say in his recent letter:

“Be it said to the credit of the President and official members and bulk of the members of the Swaraj Party that they remained calm and unruffled. The President tried to restore order but in view of the din and confusion that prevailed, he retired and resumed the Chair after a few minutes.”

The ground where the first bomb fell was torn and the second bomb, which was reported by the Press to be more dangerous than the first, after ripping open the last corner bench on the official side exploded blowing to smithereens the next front bench. Later it was also discovered that a marble-stone pillar in the Official Gallery had been hit by a bullet. Innumerable fragments of the bombs were found strewn in different parts of the Chamber and Galleries. Repair work was immediately put under way and the House had a normal appearance on Thursday, the 11th April, 1929, when it met next.

The bombs were reported to be of inferior country make of the jam-tin variety, though they were alleged to be sufficiently dangerous to cause deaths.

The Assembly met again 15 minutes after the incident with President Patel in the Chair. Most of the members who had only retired into the Lobby came in and found the Chamber full of smoke. After having consulted Mr. James Crerar, the Leader of the House, the President adjourned the House formally till Thursday, the 11th April, 1929.

The Police at once locked up all the gates of the Council House (as the Parliament House was then called) and the entire crowd was held up for two hours during which time the Police were investigating and examining the Chamber.

Of the two young men who surrendered, the one who was well-built and wearing Khaki shorts was Bhagat Singh. He was alleged

by the visitors in the gallery to have shouted "*Bande Mataram*" first and then hurled the bomb straight down on the front official benches. He was a graduate of the National University, son of Sardar Kishan Singh and nephew of Sardar Ajit Singh who was deported along with Lala Lajpat Rai to Mandalay in 1907. The other young man was dressed like a college student. His name was Butukeshwar Dutt, a Bengalee domiciled in Kanpur.

A Committee room in the first floor was placed at the disposal of the Police to keep the two men in custody till senior Police Officials arrived. Here the Police searched the bodies of the two young men for weapons and incriminating documents. They were both calm and self-possessed, confessed to their deed and to questions replied that they would make their statements later in Court.

Both men were reported to have stated that they had entered the Galleries without tickets long before the Police came to regulate admission of visitors. They had taken their seats in the Public Gallery adjacent to the Ladies Gallery to the right of the Chair.

Soon after the House adjourned for the day 70 Police Constables were posted to guard the Assembly Chamber day and night. Butukeshwar Dutt was escorted under a strong Police guard to the New Delhi Police Station, while Bhagat Singh was taken to the Central Police Station in Chandni Chowk. A large crowd outside the Council House gathered round the Police lorries which took them away.

Later Police investigations disclosed that Bhagat Singh had one automatic pistol—a Belgian Browning. In addition to one loaded magazine inside the pistol, Bhagat Singh had another loaded pistol in his pocket. It was reported that after firing two shots the Pistol got clogged and did not act. Thereupon, Bhagat Singh threw it on his seat. 14 cartridges were recovered from his person.

On the 11th April, 1929, the House met as scheduled at 11 A.M. when the President commencing the proceedings said:—

"We meet today under the shadow of a great tragedy which, but for the merciful intervention of Providence, would have resulted in consequences the seriousness of which it is not difficult to imagine. But the fact that the dastardly outrage did not result in more serious injuries does not make it any the less deplorable or condemnable. I am sure it is the unanimous wish of the House that we should place on record our emphatic condemnation of the outrage, and I, therefore, place the following motion before you, namely:—

"This House places on record its sense of horror and indignation at the dastardly outrage that was committed in the House on the morning of the 8th instant, offers its deep sympathy to Sardar Sir Bomanji Dalal and others who received injuries, and expresses its profound relief that, thanks to a merciful Providence, the results were not more serious. The House condemns unreservedly this outrage and assures the

authorities of its full support in such reasonable steps, as may be necessary to prevent a recurrence of such crimes.”*

The motion was adopted unanimously.

He then proceeded to give his interrupted ruling on the Public Safety Bill.

*L.A. Deb., dated 11th April, 1929, p. 2987.

CHAPTER II

The Background

Were the bomb explosions the insensate act of two misguided young men or were they symptomatic of the times and were deliberately timed to take place where and when they did?

To answer these questions a few of the more outstanding events in the country preceding the bomb incident should be narrated, so that the incident itself might be viewed in its proper setting.

The country was waging a relentless struggle for freedom both inside and outside the Legislative Chamber. The Indian Statutory Commission under the Chairmanship of Sir John Simon was touring the country. The appointment and composition of the Commission were taken as an affront to the national dignity and self-respect of India, as it consisted purely of British personnel. The Indian National Congress and other progressive political parties in India had declared a boycott of the Commission with the result that wherever it went it was greeted by black flag demonstrations, *hartals* and slogans like "Simon Go Back". As an inevitable concomitant of such mass demonstrations police lathi charges, firing and arrests were the order of the day. In Lahore Lala Lajpat Rai, a great patriot and national leader (whose portrait today adorns the Central Hall of Parliament House), was assaulted by the Police and injured while leading a boycott procession on the arrival of the Commission. His injuries, it was widely believed, hastened his death and on the 15th February, 1929, a non-official resolution was moved and discussed in the Central Legislative Assembly,* which demanded an enquiry into the circumstances leading to the death of this "Lion of the Punjab" as he was popularly known.

Mahatma Gandhi had started then his campaign for the boycott of foreign cloth and on the 4th March, 1929, he was arrested along with others in Calcutta for making a bonfire of foreign cloth in Shradhananda Park.† His arrest gave a great impetus to the movement for the boycott of foreign cloth and all over the country, in villages, towns and cities foreign cloth was collected door to door and made bonfires of at public meetings.

On the 20th March, 1929, at the instance of the District Magistrate of Meerut wholesale arrests of office-bearers connected with the

*L.A. Deb. Vol. I, dated 15th February 1929, pp. 832—874.

†The Indian Quarterly Register, 1929, Vol. I, pp. 17 and 19.

labour movement in India were made in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Lucknow, Poona, Allahabad and other cities on charges of waging war against the King—Emperor*

That was the picture of the country outside the Legislative Assembly.

Inside the Chamber, the bomb incident followed earlier weeks of almost daily excitement and bitter opposition to every measure before it.

On the 11th March, 1929, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Leader of the Swaraj Party (and father of the present Prime Minister), moved a cut motion that the entire Demand for Grant for the Executive Council be reduced to Re. 1 and after a memorable debate of impassioned speeches pillorying the powers that be, the motion was carried and Government suffered a defeat.**

Then followed the Finance Bill, which was passed only as amended after reducing the duty on salt. Thereupon the Governor-General sent the Bill back to the House with his recommendation restoring the Salt Duty. The Bill was finally passed as recommended by the Governor-General on the 28th March, 1929, with a bare majority of 5.† In all, the House had divided ten times during the passage of the Finance Bill, which was noted for its intense lobbying, party manoeuvrings and acrimonious debate.

Immediately thereafter the Public Safety Bill, as reported by the Select Committee, came up for consideration. Though its avowed object was to check the spread of communism and to deal with those who directly or indirectly advocated the overthrow, by force or violence, of the Government established by law in British India, yet in the words of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, a prominent Nationalist member of the House known for his sober views and mellowed expression: "The measure that they (Government) have proposed is a measure by the authority of which the Executive Government will usurp the place of the Judiciary, condemn a man without trial and then give him the chance of a farce of an appeal before three Judges,"†† Pandit Motilal Nehru had earlier called the measure the 'Slavery of India Bill'§ or the 'Safety of the Bureaucracy Bill'§ and said, "I take this Bill as a direct attack on India Nationalism and the Indian National Congress."§

At the time the Bill was being considered, 31 persons including two British nationals of the names of Philip Spratt and Benjamin Francis Bradley were facing their trial at Meerut on a charge of

*The Indian Quarterly Register, 1929, Vol. I, p. 18.

**L.A. Deb., Dated 11th March, 1929, Vol. II, pp. 1736—55, 1778—1809.

†L.A. Deb., Vol. III, dated 28th March, 1929, p. 2585.

††L.A. Deb., Vol. I, dated 7th February, 1929, p. 588.

§L.A. Deb., Vol. I, dated 6th February, 1929, pp. 531 and 534.

belonging to the 'Communist International', whose "aim was by the creation of armed revolution to overthrow all existing forms of Governments throughout the world and to replace them by Soviet Republics subordinate to and controlled by the Central Soviet Administration in Moscow".* The accused were charged with conspiring to deprive the King Emperor of the sovereignty of British India. This case was at the time popularly known as the "Meerut Conspiracy Case".*

On the 21st March, 1929, a Short Notice Question on the subject of these arrests was asked by Pandit Motilal Nehru and immediately thereafter he also moved a motion for the adjournment of the House to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the wholesale arrests and raids in several parts of India simultaneously of public workers belonging to labour and peasant organisations, youth leagues and other lawful associations. The House having given leave the motion was to be taken up at 4 P.M. that day† when the Viceroy and Governor-General Lord Irwin in exercise of the powers conferred on him by sub-rule (2) of rule 22 of the Indian Legislative Rules disallowed the motion on the ground that it could not be moved "without detriment to the public interest".

When, therefore, the Public Safety Bill, as reported by the Select Committee, was taken up on the 28th March, 1929, Mr. M. R. Jayakar raised the following point for the consideration of the Chair:—

"In the course of the debate on this Bill, which is bound to be long and bitter, if not acrimonious, many statements are likely to be made on both sides of the House which may be regarded as affecting matters which are *sub judice*. Sir, without going into the merits of the disallowance of the adjournment motion, by the Governor-General, I can say that the principle behind the disallowance was that, whether we willed it or not, we would be tending to refer to many matters which might affect prejudicially the merits of the trial which will take place in the course of the next few months. On that ground, Sir, the head of the administration thought it fit to disallow the adjournment motion. On exactly the same ground, Sir, I submit, that however much we may try, this side or the other side is bound to go, while discussing the merits of the provisions of this Bill, into many matters which may reflect upon questions which are now *sub judice* and which will remain *sub judice* for many months yet.

For instance, the spread of the communistic movement, its connection with the political movement of this country, the extent to which foreign money comes into this country, the necessity of all those provisions in the present Bill which give power to the Government to impound money in the banks, the provisions, which I personally regard as drastic, for procuring information at the hands of the Secretary of the Bank and all similar questions, I say that the discussion of these matters, if it is to be free and full—and I suppose it is the wish of the Government that it should be full and free—is bound to draw into the debate many questions which, speaking as a lawyer and as a public man, it will be best to avoid in the circumstances of

*The Indian Quarterly Register, 1929, Vol. I, pp. 65—68.

†L.A. Deb., 1929, Vol. III, dated 21st March, 1929, pp. 2266—77.

the country at present. We are all anxious, as I think, the Government are anxious, that nothing should be said or done in this House which is likely prejudicially to attract the impartiality or fairness of the inquiry which is going to take place.**

The consideration of the Bill did not proceed further that day and on the 2nd April, 1929, when the Bill was taken up, the President informed the House of certain difficulties he felt in connection with the further progress of the Bill in the following words:—

“Honourable Members are aware that the rules of business of this House provided that no question shall be asked, nor any Resolution moved, or motion for adjournment made in regard to any matter which is under adjudication by a Court of Law having jurisdiction in any part of His Majesty's dominions. It has been further provided by Standing Order No. 29** that a Member shall not be allowed, whilst speaking to any motion either on a Bill, or any other measure, to refer to any matter of fact on which a judicial decision is pending. To put it briefly, the House is not allowed to refer to, or discuss, any matter which is *sub judice* on the ground that any such reference or discussion might prejudice the pending case. The question, therefore, arises whether it is possible for this House to discuss the motion that the Public Safety Bill, as reported by the Select Committee, be taken into consideration without referring to, or discussing any of the matters which are *sub judice* in the Meerut trial. I think there can be no two opinions that real debate on the Bill is not possible without extensive reference to, and discussion of, most of the matters that are *sub judice*. In fact, I am clearly of opinion that these are the only matters that could be relevant to the issues involved in the Bill, and anything else would, strictly speaking, be irrelevant”†

He, therefore, advised the Government as follows:—

“I am sure the unanimous opinion of the House is that we should say or do nothing here calculated to prejudice the Meerut trial one way or the other; and I have, in these circumstances, decided, instead of giving any ruling to advise the Government themselves, in the first instance, to consider the observations I have made and the difficulties I have pointed out, and postpone the Bill pending the Meerut trial, or if they attach greater importance to the passing of this Bill at this juncture, to withdraw the Meerut case and then proceed further with the Bill.”

On the 4th April, 1929, Mr. James (later Sir James) Crerar, the Home Member, informed the President that “Government regretted to find themselves unable to accept either of the alternative suggestions the President had put before them”.†† Thereupon, Pandit Motilal Nehru requested the President to allow the House an opportunity “to consider the learned statement made by the hon. the Home Mem-

*L.A. Deb., 1929, Vol. III, dated 28th March, 1929, pp. 2602-03.

**S.O. No. 29. (1) The matter of every speech shall be strictly relevant to the matter before the Assembly.

(2) A member while speaking shall not—

(i) refer to any matter of fact on which a judicial decision is pending.

†L.A. Deb., 1929, Vol. III, dated 2nd April 1929, pp. 2653-54.

††L.A. Deb., 1929, Vol. III, dated 4th April, 1929, p. 2796.

ber and to express its views upon it before the President gave his ruling on the point".* The President acceded to the request and permitted a debate on the 5th April, 1929, at the conclusion of which the President reserved his ruling which was to be given on that fateful day (8th April, 1929) when Bhagat Singh with his associate aimed their bombs in the Chamber.

This background to the bomb incident had been brought out in its own way by the organisation responsible for it in the "Red" pamphlet copies of which were thrown in the Assembly Chamber along with the bombs. The text of the pamphlet read as follows:—

"The Red Pamphlet

'It takes a loud voice to make the deaf hear'—with these immortal words uttered on a similar occasion by Villant, a French Anarchist and martyr, do we strongly justify this act of ours.

Without repeating the humiliating history of the past ten years of the working of the Reforms and without mentioning the insults hurled down upon the heads of the Indian nation through this House, the so-called Indian Parliament, we want to point out that while people are expecting some more crumbs of reforms from the Simon Commission and are even quarrelling over the distribution of the expected bones, Government are thrusting upon us new repressive measures like the Public Safety and the Trade Disputes Bills, while reserving the Press Sedition Bill for the next session. The indiscriminate arrests of labour leaders working in open field clearly indicate whither the wind blows.

In these extremely provocative circumstances, the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, in all seriousness and realising its full responsibility decided and ordered its army to do this particular action, so that a stop may be put to this humiliating farce and to let the alien bureaucratic exploiters do what they wish, but to make them come before the public eye in their naked form. Let the representatives of the people return to their constituencies and prepare the masses for the coming revolution. Let the Government know that while protesting against the Public Safety and the Trade Disputes Bills and the callous murder of Lala Lajpat Rai, on behalf of the helpless Indian masses, we want to emphasise the lesson often repeated by history that it is easy to kill individuals, but you can't kill ideas. Great empires crumbled while ideas survive. Bourbons and Czars fell while revolutionaries marched triumphantly ahead.

We are sorry to admit that we, who attach so great a sanctity to human life, we, who dream of a very glorious future, when man will be enjoying perfect peace and full liberty, have been forced to shed human blood. But the sacrifice of individuals at the altar of a great revolution that will bring freedom to all rendering exploitation of man by man impossible, is inevitable.

Long live the Revolution."†

*L.A. Deb., 1929, Vol. III, dated 4th April, 1929, p. 2797.

†The Associated Press of India, dated 8th April, 1929.

CHAPTER III.

The Sequel

The curtain was not wrung on the incident with the House on the 11th April, 1929 condemning the outrage and adopting a motion of sympathy for the victims moved by President Patel. In fact its sequel from a Parliamentary point of view invested the incident itself with much greater importance than it otherwise deserved.

Before the bomb incident, the admission to the Council House (now Parliament House) was controlled by the police authorities who had men posted at each entrance to the building and who had instructions to admit only persons who held Visitors' Cards or Official passes. For this purpose, Official passes were issued to Government Officials and Visitors' Cards were issued to members of the public for the Galleries. As regards actual admission to the Galleries, the control was entirely in the hands of the police who had men posted at each door leading directly to the Galleries with instructions to admit card holders only.

On the 3rd September, 1929 the Speaker informed the House:—

"I desire to make a statement on a question which has been engaging my attention since the bomb outrage in the Delhi Chamber on the 8th April last. It has not been found possible to ascertain exactly how the perpetrators of the outrage got admission into the Visitors' Gallery on that particular day, though we have heard it stated that they did so without tickets, and before the arrival of the police who check visitors' tickets at the entrance to the gallery. Whether this statement is true or not, the fact remains that some modification is called for in the system of check over admission of visitors, and perhaps also in the issue of tickets with a view to minimise opportunities of mischief of similar or any other kind in future....."*

With these observations the President announced the appointment of a Watch and Ward Committee of 9 members with Sir James Crerar, the Home Member, as Chairman and Rai Sahib D. Dutt (Assistant Secretary, Legislative Assembly Department) as Secretary. One of the terms of reference to the Committee was "to consider and recommend whether the time has arrived for the Assembly to entertain its own staff for the purpose of guarding the floor, the galleries and the lobbies as also of regulating the admission of visitors and to leave it to the police, under the orders of the President to guard other parts of the Assembly building.....".**

Thus the first step was taken towards the creation, evolution and ultimate establishment on a permanent basis of a Watch and Ward staff for the protection of the Assembly Chamber and its precincts.

*L.A. Deb., 1929, Vol. IV, dated 3rd September, 1929, pp. 151-52.

**L.A. Deb., 1929, Vol. IV, dated 3rd September, 1929, p. 153.

The Committee reported in due course but a controversy then ensued as between the President and the Government as to who should be in supreme and independent control of the protective arrangements within the precincts of the House—whether it was the President of the Assembly or the Government. The controversy reached its climax on the 20th January, 1930 when President Patel made the following statement to the House:—

"I desire to bring to the notice of this House a very serious situation which has arisen as a result of certain differences of opinion between the Government of India and the Chief Commissioner, Delhi, on the one hand, and the President of the Assembly on the other, regarding the question of control over admission of visitors in the outer as well as the inner precincts of the Assembly sector. The Government of India and the Chief Commissioner maintain that they, being responsible for the safety of the President and other Members of this House, are entitled to take such measures and post as many policemen in any part of the sector, with such instructions to them as they consider necessary, and that they are the sole judges of the adequacy of the protective measures to be taken in that behalf. The President of the Assembly, on the other hand, is of opinion that his authority within the precincts of the Assembly sector is so supreme and his control so complete, that his word as to the adequacy of the protective measures to be taken is final, and that no measures which have not his previous approval could be put into force within the precincts of the sector.

* * * * *

As Honourable Members are aware, the President of the Assembly had appointed a Watch and Ward Committee under the Chairmanship of the Leader of the House to consider the whole question of the precautionary measures to be taken and to advise him thereon. The Committee had recently submitted their Report and the President has passed certain orders on their recommendations. The proposals which the Chief Commissioner, Delhi, with the full concurrence of the Government of India, has put into operation from today, after full knowledge of the orders passed by the President on the recommendations of the Watch and Ward Committee, are in deliberate defiance of those orders and constitute a challenge to the authority of the Chair.

* * * * *

In these circumstances, I have no other course open but to direct that all the galleries, except the Press gallery, be forthwith cleared and closed, and that no further passes be issued to strangers until further orders. I hope the authorities concerned will in the meantime reconsider their position, and I will also consider what further steps I should take to vindicate the authority of the Chair."*

Fortunately, the controversy was not allowed to last long and was resolved by the intervention of Viceroy Lord Irwin, who in his letter dated the 19th February, 1930† informed the President that the Government had recognised the general desire among Members of the Assembly that the requisite protection should be secured for the President and the Members of the Assembly while in discharge of their duty with the help of a staff of suitable quality for this purpose under a

*L.A. Deb. 1930, Vol. I, dated 20th January, 1930, pp. 1-2.

†L.A. Deb. 1930, Vol. I, dated 19th February, 1930, pp. 823-26.

senior police officer to be deputed to the service of the Assembly and to be designated as 'Watch and Ward Officer'. The staff would be part of the Assembly establishment subject to the control of the President exercised through the Watch and Ward Officer for regulating all matters relating to the protection of the Assembly within the Inner Precincts.

After reading out the full text of this letter, President Patel made the following statement in the House on the 20th February, 1930:—

"Honourable Members are aware of the difference on this matter, which arose between Government and myself, and I hope that the arrangement outlined in His Excellency's letter will prove to be a satisfactory solution of them. Without entering into a discussion of the legal aspects of the question, Government have now proposed the establishment of a convention, which offers means of resolving the immediate difficulty with which we are concerned, and which, I trust provides a permanent working basis for the future. On behalf of the House, I accept the arrangement in the same spirit as that in which it has been put forward, and as the convention which will now be established provides adequately for the exercise of authority by the Chair, I am glad to say that I shall always welcome and be guided on matters affecting the security of this House by the considered advice, which the authorities concerned may tender to me.

As the main question is now settled, I accordingly hereby direct that the galleries be re-opened on and from Monday, the 24th February 1930 and passes issued to visitors in the usual manner."*

Thus the Visitors' galleries which had been closed since the 20th January, 1930, were again thrown open to the public from the 24th February, 1930, after the lapse of over a month.

It would be recalled that the bombs in the Chamber came as an explosive climax to the deferred ruling of the Speaker on the Public Safety Bill, which, among other acts of omission and commission by Government, was mentioned in the "Red pamphlet" as *casus belli*. The points at issue between the President and the Government have already been stated in the earlier Chapter. When actually the ruling was given three days after the bomb incident the conflict between the Chair and the Viceroy had assumed unforeseen proportions involving as it did grave issues of Parliamentary import.

The Public Safety Bill was the case of a Bill which had been duly introduced by leave of the House, considered and referred to a Select Committee. When the motion was later moved by the Government member in charge that the Bill, as reported by the Select Committee, be taken into consideration, the President for the first time and perhaps the last in the annals of the House withheld proposing the motion to the House and ultimately ruled it out of order.

*L.A. Deb., 1930, Vol. I, dated 20th February, 1930, p. 825.

This ruling which had been interrupted on the 8th of April by Bhagat Singh's bombs was given by him on the 11th April, 1929. The following relevant excerpts from the ruling which relate to procedure and conduct of business in the House will be of interest to Parliamentarians everywhere:

“ * * * * *

It has been contended that, as the motion *(viz.* that the Public Safety Bill as reported by the Select Committee be taken into consideration) has already been made the House is seized of the Bill and the Chair has no power to withhold it from its consideration. This is a mistaken view. The point that a motion is out of order can be taken at any time before it is voted upon, and the Chair is entitled to rule it out if it is of that opinion.

The only question that now remains to be determined is whether the motion is in order or not. It is my duty, as President of this House, to see that it transacts its business with due regard to the forms and procedure laid down in the Act, Rules and Standing Orders governing the same, and where no Rules or Standing Orders exist, in accordance with accepted principles, precedents and conventions that should regulate the fair discussion and free decision of every question before the House. It is a duty which the President owes to the House and to every Member thereof, and is one which he cannot share with or delegate to the Government or the Opposition, or submit to the verdict of a majority or a minority in the House. 'Every matter requiring the decision of the Assembly' to quote the words of Standing Order 30, 'can only be brought forward by means of a question put by the President on a motion proposed by a Member.' When a motion is so proposed and spoken to by the Mover, it is the right of the House to discuss it, and no derogation from, or infringement of this right of reasonable debate can be permitted by the Chair on any ground, real or imaginary, of urgent executive policy or otherwise. Even where express provision is made by the Standing Orders or Rules for an abridgement of this right, e.g., motions for closure, it is the duty of the President to see that they do not involve an abuse of the Rules or Standing Orders or an infringement of the right of reasonable debate. It follows, therefore, that the President cannot put the question for the decision of the House without a reasonable debate or without affording to Members every opportunity for such debate. It is obvious that, to do so, would be to deny to the House its fundamental right of free discussion and decision on the merits of the question before it. It would constitute a negation of the very basis of all deliberative and legislative bodies. As I have already pointed out, not only no reasonable debate, but hardly any debate is possible in respect of the motion now before the House.

* * * * *

It has been contended that the right to rule the motion out of order is not expressly conferred on the President by any of the Rules or Standing Orders of the Assembly. Indeed, the Law Member goes further and says that, as the Assembly and its President are creatures of the Statute, the convention and precedents of the House of Commons have no application, and that such power cannot be deduced by implication from the provisions of Rules and Standing Orders. Such a power must, according to him, be expressly given. But it is a matter

of common knowledge that conventions*and precedents of the House of Commons are being quoted repeatedly in the legislative bodies in India and acted upon.

* *

• For these reasons, I am of opinion that, although power to rule this motion out of order is not expressed in so many words in any of the Rules and Standing Orders, it does arise by necessary implication and analogy, and I am further satisfied that, in any case, the Chair has the inherent power to rule out a motion on the ground that it involves an abuse of the forms and procedure of this House as this motion, I hold, does. I therefore rule it out of order.”*

Immediately after making the statement the President announced to the House that he had received a communication from His Excellency the Viceroy and the Governor-General requiring the attendance of the members of the Legislative Assembly in the Assembly Chamber at 11 o'clock on the following day, namely, Friday, the 12th April, 1929.

In his address to the members of both Houses on the 12th April, the Viceroy, after referring to the bomb outrage on the 8th instant, stated as follows:—

“The second reason for which I have required your attendance this morning was to acquaint Honourable Members with the decisions reached by my Government in view of the situation created by the ruling given yesterday by the President of the Legislative Assembly. The result of that ruling, which it is not my purpose here to discuss, is twofold. In the first place, it propounds an interpretation of the rules, which I am satisfied is not in conformity with their original intention.

In the second place, the practical effect of the President's ruling, as it stands, is to debar Government from asking the Legislature to give it the additional powers of which it conceives itself to stand in need, and to make it impossible for either Chamber of the Legislature to record any decision upon Government's proposals, or to form its own judgment upon the question whether or not it could usefully conduct its debates on these proposals within the rules of order.

I desire to state clearly the position of myself and my Government on both these issues. Entertaining, as it does, no doubt as to the intention of the rules in question, my Government is nonetheless constrained to recognise that the only appropriate person to interpret, within either House of the legislature, the rules under which it works is the President of the House himself. If, therefore, the interpretation of the rules by the President of either House gives rise, as now, to a situation in which Government, for grave reasons, is unable to acquiesce, the only effective remedy is that early measures should be taken to secure, by due authority such amendment of the rules, as may be necessary to prevent any recurrence in future of a similar interruption in the normal legislative procedure. That course we propose to follow without delay, and in order that there may be no misunderstanding, I will add that the broad purpose of the amendment in the rules, which we propose to seek, will be to secure that the progress of legislation, which it is within the power of the Indian Legislature to pass, shall not be prevented by the President of either House, except

in virtue of express powers to do so conferred upon him by the Rules and Standing Orders.*

Meanwhile, and pending the possibility of further action in the Legislature, the primary responsibility for protecting the foundations of the ordered State rests and must rest upon the Executive Government, of which I am head. Neither I nor my Government can neglect that responsibility, even though the technical difficulty created by the ruling to which I have already referred has made it impossible to share it with the Legislature.**

Proceeding further, he announced—

"I have accordingly decided, after careful review of all the facts, to avail myself of the authority conferred upon the Governor General under section 72 of the Government of India Act, in order to issue an Ordinance, giving to the Governor General in Council, the powers in question."**

As would be apparent, some of the observations in His Excellency's Address were such as no Speaker who is zealous to uphold the dignity of the Chair and maintain the independence of the House would allow to go unchallenged. As the President observed in his statement to the House on the 2nd September, 1929:—

"I have always maintained and will continue to maintain, so long as I am in this Chair, that the House and the Chair are, subject to the constitution, supreme within the four walls of this Chamber and I would be unworthy of the confidence reposed in me by the House if I failed on any occasion to raise my voice in protest against any action which in my view seemed to challenge or undermine that supremacy."†

Therefore, he had addressed a letter dated the 8th March, 1929 to Lord Irwin in which the President after conveying to His Excellency his "pain, surprise and sorrow" at the criticism of the Chair contained in the Viceroy's Address, stated:—

"The proceedings of the Assembly would have disclosed that there was, to say the least, room for honest difference of opinion. The person occupying the Chair had, in the circumstances and in the situation that arose, to interpret the rules and lay down procedure as best as he could in the exercise of his undoubted powers, and you yourself were frank enough to admit in your address that the only appropriate person to interpret in either House of the Legislature the rules under

*Under Section 67(1) read with section 129A of the Government of India Act, 1919 the following Indian Legislative Assembly Rule 17A defining the President's powers in regard to Bills was published in the Gazette of India, Part I, dated 24-8-1929.

17A. Notwithstanding anything contained in rule 15 or rule 17, the President shall not have or exercise any power to prevent or delay the making or discussion of any motion relating to a Bill made by the Member in charge of the Bill or to refuse to put, or delay the putting of, the question on any such motion, unless such power is expressly conferred upon him by, or such motion or discussion or the putting of such question, as the case may be, is expressly prohibited or directly precluded by, any provision of the Act, the Government of India Act, these Rules or the Standing Orders.

**L.A. Deb. 1929, Vol. III, dated 12th April, 1929, pp. 2994-95.

†L.A. Deb. 1929, Vol. IV, dated 2nd September, 1929, pp. 109-110.

which it works is the President of the House himself. In a matter of interpretation of the Rules and Standing Orders, the only safe guide is to go by their language, Your Excellency will agree with me that I could only proceed on the Rules and Standing Orders as they stand at present and according to the best of my lights and could not go in search of an 'original intention' apart from the language of the Rules. While so, it is somewhat surprising that, in more than one place, Your Excellency refers to yourself and to your Government not being satisfied as to my interpretation being in conformity with the original intention. The emphasis laid by Your Excellency on my interpretation not being in accordance with the original intention, on my ruling being calculated to interrupt the work of the House, and upon the Legislature being prevented from forming its own judgment on the question whether or not it could usefully conduct its debates, the reference to the technical difficulty created by my ruling standing in the way of your sharing the responsibility of protecting the ordered state with the Legislature, the intention announced in Your Excellency's address that the proper authority will so amend the Rules as to prevent the President of either House from impeding the progress of legislation; all these appear to me, in the circumstances and in the context, nothing short of a censure passed by Your Excellency upon my ruling. I need hardly point out that under the Rules and Standing Orders I am the sole and final authority on all questions relating to order arising in the House, and if my conduct is to be impugned, it can only be impugned by a direct appeal to the House upon notice of motion properly given, when a straight issue would be laid before the House and an amendment be moved which shall test the judgment of the House. In no other manner and by no other authority could the ruling of the Chair be subjected to any criticism or censure within the Assembly Chamber of which I am the President. Such indeed is the sanctity attached to the rulings of the Chair by constitution and by convention.

* * * * *

Since you made your speech, I was searching for some precedent from the proceedings of the Parliaments of the Dominions in support of your action, and I am in a position to inform Your Excellency that never before has any representative of the Crown such as you have chosen to criticise any ruling of any Speaker of any of the Parliaments of the Dominions in the manner in which you have criticised my ruling."*

In reply he received a communication dated the 15th May, 1929 from the Private Secretary to His Excellency. The following extracts from this letter completely vindicated the authority of the Chair and the dignity of the House:—

"His Excellency desires to say that it was no part of his intention by his address, as indeed within the House he would consider it improper, either to criticise the ruling you had given or pass censure upon you for it, and His Excellency regrets that his words should have been so interpreted by yourself or others. Such an interpretation in the circumstances in which the address was delivered was perhaps inevitable, but His Excellency wishes me to make plain to you, and through you to the Assembly, his entire concurrence with your view that within the House it is the President, subject only to the House itself in the established form as indicated in your letter, who is the sole and final authority, under the Rules and Standing Orders on all questions relating to order that may arise.

* * * * *

I am desired by His Excellency to add that he fully shares your anxiety to maintain the dignity of the House and the authority of the Chair. He earnestly hopes, and has no doubt that such hope is entertained by the President, that the passage of time may see the gradual establishment around the Chair of the Assembly, in the constitutional conditions of the Indian legislature, of such a body of tradition, as has in the 'sphere of the House of Commons, enabled each of a long line of Speakers to be successively accepted as the impartial guide and trusted friend of all sections of the House. To this end His Excellency trusts that he and the President may continue to co-operate."*

It had always been the practice of President Patel to take the House into his confidence at every stage in his controversies with the Government. Accordingly on the 2nd September, 1929 he read out to the House the full texts of both his letter to the Viceroy and the reply thereto and observed:—

"In view of what His Excellency has said, I am convinced that it was not his desire to establish a precedent derogatory to the dignity of the House, and I am sure the House will agree with me that the incident must now be treated as closed.

I desire to state, in conclusion, that nothing has pleased me more in His Excellency's reply than the sincere expression of his anxiety to see the establishment in this country of best Parliamentary traditions and conventions and to co-operate with the Chair for that purpose, and I need hardly assure His Excellency and his Government that I fully echo his desire in this respect."**

*L.A. Deb., 1929, Vol. IV, dated 2nd September, 1929, p. 111.

**L.A. Deb., 1929 Vol. IV, dated 2nd September, 1929, p. 112.

CHAPTER IV

Post Script

The story so far narrated of the bombs, the background and the aftermath would indicate how long after the explosions their echoes were heard in the Chamber, the Lobbies and the corridors of the Parliament House in Delhi.

In conclusion perhaps the significance of the event and its sequel might be assessed from a purely Parliamentary point of view.

The first outcome of the incident was the assertion and vindication of the supreme authority of the Speaker within the precincts of the Assembly and the creation of a Watch and Ward staff under the complete control of the Speaker for the protection of the Assembly Chamber and its premises. Today it consists of a Watch and Ward Officer of the rank of a senior Police Officer with an Assistant Watch and Ward Officer and a body of specially recruited and trained men and women.

Since April, 1929 in spite of the intense political struggle of the country that followed for its emancipation, the mass arrests and detentions of its respected leaders, the lathi-charges and shootings connected with successive non-cooperation movements led by Mahatma Gandhi, the communal animosities that preceded and followed the partition of the country the fact that no similar incident occurred again inside the Legislative Assembly Chamber all these years is a tribute to the efficiency of the Watch and Ward Organisation which has been functioning under the exclusive and supreme control of the President of the Legislative Assembly and from 1947 under the Speaker of Lok Sabha.

The other sequel incidental to the explosions was the vindication of the dignity and the independence of the House and the recognition of the Chair as the sole and final authority under the Rules and Standing Orders on all questions relating to order and as the only person qualified to interpret within the House the rules under which it works.

The Central Legislative Assembly being a creation of the British Parliament was a subordinate House whose proceedings and functions were subject to the control of or interruption by the Governor-General; its decisions could be over-ruled by him in his discretion. The Rules of the House, under the Government of India Act, 1919, were framed by the Governor-General-in-Council and, therefore, without any reference to the House, the Government of the day could promulgate a new rule 17A on the 24th August, 1929 depriving the Speaker of

his inherent discretionary powers, which in the interest of order and proper conduct of the proceedings in the House should vest in him in a Parliamentary Democracy. However, what was lost then he has since inherited as the natural guardian of the powers, privileges and immunities of a sovereign democratic Parliament in a free and independent India.

In spite of the Constitutional limitations of the day, by his assertion and vindication of the dignity of the House and the supremacy of the Chair, President Patel laid the solid foundations of the best traditions and conventions of a sovereign democratic Parliament and as such has won for himself an abiding place in the annals of the growth and development of Parliamentary Institutions in India. Today his portrait installed in the Lok Sabha Chamber facing the Speaker is a fitting tribute to his memory and an unfailing inspiration to his successors in the Chair.

And, finally, to turn to the fate of the two young men, whose rash act in the Assembly Chamber on that fateful Monday, the 8th April, 1929 led to events of unexpected Parliamentary significance.

On the 7th May, 1929 the trial of Bhagat Singh and his comrade Butukeshwar Dutt commenced in the Court of Mr. B. F. Poole, the Additional District Magistrate of Delhi.* In the course of a statement they made to the court they explained their motives in throwing the bombs in the Assembly Chamber. According to them the bombs were thrown not with the object of taking life but to draw the world's attention to India under "the over-riding domination of irresponsible and autocratic rule". The fact that in a crowded chamber no one was seriously hurt, they contended, showed with what care to avoid loss of life the bombs were thrown. The Assembly, they said, was specially chosen for this demonstration, as it had been used by Government repeatedly to flout the national demand and had become a symbol of "India's humiliation and helplessness".**

They were both sentenced to transportation for life on the 12th June, 1929.† But Bhaghat Singh was not to serve out his sentence. He had been earlier involved as one of the accused in what was known as the Lahore Conspiracy Case, in which I. P. Saunders, a British Police Officer, had been murdered. He was found guilty and sentenced to death along with two other comrades by a Special Tribunal in Lahore Jail on the 7th October, 1930.‡

These sentences came at a time when the country was in the throes of a mass civil disobedience campaign. Mahatma Gandhi was in jail;

*The Indian Quarterly Register, 1929, Vol. I, p. 23.

The 'Hindustan Times', dated 8th April, 1929.

**The Indian Quarterly Register, 1929, Vol. I, p. 78.

†The Indian Quarterly Register, 1929, Vol. I, p. 24.

‡The Indian Annual Register, 1930, Vol. II, p. 27.

as also the entire Working Committee of the Indian National Congress. The prisons all over the country were overflowing with tens of thousands of Satyagrahis.

On the 26th January, 1931, Mahatma Gandhi, along with other members of the Congress Working Committee, was released from prison to enable him to conduct negotiations with the Viceroy for the suspension of the civil disobedience movement. The talks ended with the Gandhi-Irwin Truce on the 5th March, 1931.

In the country's mood at the time, the condemned men were invested with the halo of national heroes awaiting martyrdom.

While the sentences were pending execution there were country-wide demonstrations of sympathy for Bhagat Singh and his comrades. On the 28th February, 1931, a mass meeting was held in the Azad Maidan, Bombay, at which it was proposed to send a monster petition to the Viceroy signed by two lakhs of citizens requesting His Excellency to commute the death sentences to one of transportation for life.*

Two days after the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, at a mass meeting in Delhi which he addressed Mahatmaji was asked "How can there be peace when a sentence of death is hanging over the heads of Bhagat Singh and his compatriots?" Gandhiji replied, "My creed of non-violence does not favour the punishment of thieves and dacoits and even murderers. I cannot in all conscience agree to any one being sent to the gallows, much less a brave man like Bhagat Singh."**

So on the 19th March, 1931, Mahatma Gandhi who was in Bombay left for Delhi to have an interview with Lord Irwin on the eve of his departure for the Congress session at Karachi. He pleaded with His Excellency for the commutation of the death sentences. He told the Viceroy that "if the young man (Bhagat Singh) was hanged there was likelihood that he would become a national martyr and the general atmosphere (of the country) would be seriously prejudiced".† Lord Irwin, however, was unmoved and adamant. He told Mahatmaji "While I quite appreciated his (Gandhiji's) feeling in the matter . . . my only duty was to work the law as I understood it. On that basis I could not conceive anyone, who had more thoroughly deserved capital punishment than Bhagat Singh".† (Later, on the 28th March, 1931 in his farewell speech to the Chelmsford Club at Delhi, His Excellency explained fully the reasons which deterred him from acceding to Gandhiji's request.)‡

*The Indian Annual Register, 1931, Vol. I, p. 28.

**"Mahatma" by D. G. Tendulkar, Vol. 3, pp. 79-80.

†"Fullness of Days" by the Earl of Halifax, p. 149.

‡Vide Appendix C.

Meanwhile Lord Irwin had rejected a mercy petition from Bhagat Singh's father and an appeal on Wednesday, the 20th March, 1931, for reprieve from Bhagat Singh himself. His execution was imminent: it was fixed for the following Saturday. Mahatmaji thought of a last moment appeal to the Viceroy. In the early hours of the 23rd March, 1931, he wrote a letter appealing to the "charity" of Lord Irwin, "a great Christian".* His plea was in vain for the same night Bhagat Singh was hanged in the Lahore jail, his body immediately cremated on the banks of the Sutlej and his remains thrown into the river.

*"Mahatma" by D. G. Tendulkar, Vol. 3, page 92,

(V)

APPENDICES

(A)

PRESS REPORTS

- (i) Associated Press of India
 - (ii) *The Hindustan Times*
 - (iii) *The Hindu*
 - (iv) *The Times of India*
 - (v) *The Statesman*
 - (vi) Statements and Press Comments
-

(i) ASSOCIATED PRESS OF INDIA

April 8, 1929

A connected account of the day's happenings in the Assembly is now available. Consideration of the Trade Disputes Bill had taken the Assembly up to 12.35 by which time all the galleries had been crowded to overflow and Sir Jhon Simon had just then come in to hear the President's ruling. The Trade Disputes Bill division resulted in its passage by 56 to 38, and the official side of the House cheered the defeat of the Congress and Nationalist opposition to the measure. Just when President Patel rose to deliver his ruling, a bomb fell from the Visitors' Gallery near Sir George Schuster's seat. This caused panic, and the members at once dispersed. A second bomb was dropped when the House was emptying. Sir George Schuster and Sir Bomanji Dalal were injured and were at once attended to in the Finance Member's room. They were both dressed up and Sir Bomanji was removed to the Hindu Rao Hospital. Mr. S. N. Roy who was in the Official Gallery and Mr. P. R. Rau and Mr. Shankar Rau, sitting in the Chamber, were slightly injured. All are well, and there is no anxiety at all except that in the case of Sir Bomanji Dalal the wound is serious.

The ground where the bomb fell was torn and two benches were ripped.

The two men, immediately after dropping the bombs, are reported to have fired two pistols in the air. Immediately thereafter, they threw their pistols on their seat, and one of them said: 'I have done it and here is my pistol'. He gave himself up without resistance to the police sergeant. The accused Bhagat Singh and Butukeshwar Dutt, the former of the Punjab and the latter of Bengal domiciled in Cawnpore, are reported to have confessed their crime to the police. The police at once locked up all the gates of the Council House and the entire crowd was choked for two hours, during which time the police were investigating and examining the Chamber.

The Assembly met again in fifteen minutes after the incident. Most of the members who had merely retired into the lobby came in and found the Chamber full of smoke. President Patel adjourned the House formally till Thursday.

A "Red" pamphlet headed "Hindustan Socialist Republican Army" and signed by one Balraj, "Commander-in-Chief", was thrown by someone from the gallery.

Both the men are reported to have stated that they entered the galleries without ticket as they came in long before the police had come to regulate admission.

Sir George Schuster was hit on the outside part of the arm, but not seriously. Sir Bomanji Dalal suffered seriously from the shock. His pulse was very weak and it was at one time feared that he would succumb to the shock. The wound was $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide right down to the outer and middle part of the right thigh. It was a lucky escape for Sir Bomanji Dalal.

Bombs seemed to be of inferior country make, but were sufficiently dangerous to cause deaths. Mr. K. C. Roy had a lucky escape. An official back bench was ripped, but luckily all the members had just left as the result of the first bomb.

Accused Examined

Both the accused were examined separately by the Police officials. Both of them deferred making a statement till they were examined in court. The case is being investigated on the basis of a charge of attempted murder under Section 307 I.P.C.

Butukeshwar Dutt was escorted under a strong Police Guard to New Delhi station, while Bhagat Singh was taken to the Central Police Station in Chandni Chowk, Old Delhi.

Assembly Guarded by Police

Further reports show that 70 Police Constables have been posted in the Assembly Chamber to guard it day and night till tomorrow afternoon.

The two accused.....did not look disturbed. A large crowd gathered round them as they got into the lorries. The Police are investigating the crime on a charge of attempted murder.

..Bhagat Singh was once previously arrested in the Punjab but let off. Dutt's past record is not known. The Police are trying to trace the mischief to its source and some suggest that a clue might now be found even to the murder of Mr. Saunders. Hereafter there will be very strict supervision regarding the Visitors' Galleries in the Assembly. Bombs were country-made and of an inferior type. Though they caused loud explosion, they were not capable of much damage.

April 9, 1929

Examination of arrested persons

Further enquiries regarding yesterday's Assembly bomb outrage show that Bhagat Singh had one automatic pistol—a Belgian Browning—while Dutt had none as previously reported. In addition to one loaded magazine inside the pistol, Bhagat Singh had another pistol, loaded in his pocket, the total number of cartridges being 16.

It appears that after firing two shots, the pistol got clogged and did not act. Thereupon, Bhagat Singh threw it on his seat. Fourteen cartridges were recovered from his person.

It is understood that although senior police officers were closetted with the accused for several hours last night no further clue of either the organisation they claimed to belong to or the place they had been putting up in Delhi was discovered. It is also reported that no incriminating document was discovered on the person of either accused. They have been keeping silence so far and telling the Police that they would make a statement only before the Court. The Legislative Assembly Chamber is strongly guarded by the Police and examination and investigation are proceeding. Two C.I.D. Police Officers, Messrs. Fraser and Sant Singh, have arrived from Lahore to help in the investigation.

It was found that the stone-pillar in the Officers Box was hit by a bullet. It appears that the second bomb was more dangerous than the first for, after ripping open the last corner bench, it exploded wrecking the next front bench. Repair work has already been started in the House and it is expected that everything will have normal appearance before the Assembly meets on Thursday.

ISSUE OF VISITORS' TICKETS

Strict control

The earlier report that President Patel ordered that no tickets be issued for Thursday is not correct. The President has not issued any orders yet. It is expected that strictness will be observed in issuing visitors' tickets hereafter.

(ii) *THE HINDUSTAN TIMES*

BOMBS AND PISTOLS CREATE CHAOS IN ASSEMBLY—TWO BOMBS EXPLODED: PISTOL SHOTS FIRED: SCREAMING WOMEN FROM LADIES GALLERY: SIR BOMANJI DALAL SERIOUSLY INJURED: TWO

Sir George Schuster, Mrs. S. C. Gupta and other officials receive minor injuries—Sir John Simon watches scene

(From Special Correspondent)

April 8, 1929

Just as the voting on the Trades Disputes Bill was over and the Bill had been declared carried by the President, and before the President started to give his ruling on the Public Safety Bill, there was a hustle in the Visitors' Gallery and then a thundering noise, resulting in chaos and smoke. A bomb or something like it fell and the atmosphere in the House became dark. There were shrieks in the Ladies Gallery, cries and noises below, and before the people had got over the first shock there was a second explosion. Another bomb fell. Thunder and smoke again, and shrieks, confusion, chaos, all prevailed, Members trying to rush out, visitors dashing out for safety, women running for protection. And then two pistol shots were heard. The members and visitors, all were terrified. After sometime the smoke disappeared, the members had all collected in the centre of the House. The President left his seat. There was chaos and confusion. Suddenly it was discovered that there was some one in the Assembly Visitors' Gallery with a bleeding hand. He offered himself for arrest to the police, so did his companion. The President re-appeared to announce that the Assembly was adjourned till Thursday. Immediately after, the police appeared on the scene and vacated the Assembly Chamber as well as the galleries. All doors of the Assembly were closed, and no person including the members was allowed to leave the Chamber.

It appears that the first bomb exploded near Sir George Schuster's seat, but apart from giving minor injuries to Sir George and Mrs. S. C. Gupta, ripped a part of the flooring and broke the wood work of the desks. The second bomb exploded on the back official benches and injured Sir Bomanji Dalal seriously and Mr. S. N. Roy, who was sitting in the Official Box, rather slightly. The two pistol shots led to no injury. Side by side with the bombs, the culprit threw many red pamphlets in the Assembly signed by one Balraj, Commander-in-Chief of the revolutionary army and issued in the name of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army.

It appears that the names of the arrested persons are Bhagat Singh, who, it is understood, is a graduate of the National University, the son of Sardar Kishen Singh of Lahore and nephew of Sardar Ajit Singh of 1907 fame. Bhagat Singh, it is understood, was not wearing a hat. The companion of Bhagat Singh is Mr. Butukeshwar Dutt of Cawnpore. The bombs, some consider to be of the Jam Pop fuse quality and not of a very dangerous kind. The Police have taken charge of the Assembly, and are carrying on investigations. Mr. Jeffreys and other senior officers of the Police, including Director-General of Police for India arrived on the spot and are carrying on enquiries. At 1:50, the members of the Assembly were allowed to leave but the visitors were all kept in.

It is further understood that after throwing the bombs, the alleged accused shouted "Long Live Revolution" and offered themselves for arrest.

* * * * *

The first bomb fell near the seats of Sir George Schuster, Mr. P. R. Rau, Mr. Shankar Rau, and Mr. K. C. Roy but all escaped, only Sir George Schuster had a slight injury. Splinters spread in all directions and hit particularly Mr. S. N. Roy who in the Official Gallery and his sister Mrs. S. C. Gupta in the Ladies Gallery. The injuries, however, were not serious except Sir Bomanji Dalal's who was removed to the Hindu Rao Hospital.

It is understood that the accused in the Assembly Bomb Case will be tried by Mr. B. F. Poole, Additional District Magistrate, who recently took charge, relieving Mr. Anderson.

It is further learnt that a number of shoes, caps, umbrellas and other miscellaneous articles have been found lying unclaimed in the Visitors' Galleries which were perhaps left by the visitors in the hurry to save themselves.

ASSEMBLY BOMB OUTRAGE AND AFTER: C.I.D. FLOCK IN DELHI:
"LINKING OUTRAGE WITH SAUNDERS' MURDER".

*Vigorous Police Investigation. Accused to make Statements in Court.
Sir Bomanji Dalal progressing*

(From our Correspondent)

April 9, 1929

Delhi is today the stronghold of the C.I.D. from all provinces, who are having a very busy time since yesterday afternoon. Quite a number of them are seen sitting outside the New Delhi Police Station, the Assembly Chamber and other places in New Delhi. A number of them are also seen running about the city.

Telegrams were sent to Lahore and Cawnpore soon after the bombing incident in the Assembly and police and C.I.D. officials from

Lahore arrived this morning. Sardar Sant Singh, Deputy Superintendent, C.I.D. in charge of the Saunders' murder case enquiry, along with other officers, is busy at the Raisina Police Station trying to find out any link between Mr. Saunders' murder and the Assembly incident. The police authorities are hopeful that they will be able to trace the murderer of the late Mr. Saunders. All the records and exhibits of the case have been brought down from Lahore to Delhi and the police authorities feel hopeful that they will be able to get the clue very shortly because of the presence of the pistol etc.

Automatic Pistol

It is understood that the pistol is a 16 cartridge automatic pistol and if it had not jammed after two shots, the consequences would have been very serious.

Investigation in Assembly

Sardar Chet Singh, Sub-Inspector in charge, New Delhi, is recording statements of a number of eye-witnesses and has prepared a list of damaged benches and other articles in the Assembly. The police are trying their best to trace out the two short cartridges. Much secrecy is being observed throughout. The rumour that more arrests have been made in Delhi is untrue.

* * * *

Sir Bomanji Progressing

On enquiries from the Medical Officer in charge of Hindu Rao Hospital, it is learnt that Bomanji Dalal is keeping quite cheerful. His injury which is only 2 inches long is flesh deep and the bones have not been affected. The officer in charge told the *Hindustan Times* reporter that there was nothing serious, and that Sir Bomanji would recover within a week's time. Asked as to how he (Sir Bomanji) felt at the time of incident, he said he was simply stunned and could not remember as to what happened actually. His statement has not yet been recorded by the police.

MORE DETAILS ABOUT BOMB OUTRAGE: THE COMIC SIDE OF TRAGEDY

Sir Harisingh Gour hides in bath-room: Muslim M.L.A. behind almirah: Sir John Simon takes to his heels

BENGALI ACCUSED'S ANTECEDENTS: REMAND FOR FOURTEEN DAYS:
SECRET POLICE INVESTIGATIONS

(From Special Correspondent)

9th April, 1929

Police are maintaining strict secrecy about the investigation in the Assembly Bomb Case. No reliable information is therefore hitherto available. Inquiries made however from authentic sources go to show

that the police carried on a vigorous search for the two blank cartridges one of which was found on the floor after evidently it had struck the wall behind the official benches, while the other has not been traced.

Voluntary Arrest

The accused, it is understood, offered themselves for arrest to Sergeant Tarry and a constable. People who were near the accused, however, stated that two or three policemen who were standing nearby passively watched the scene and even on some people asking them to stop the accused, they remained unmoved.

Sir Harisingh in Bath-room

The statements of eight persons have been recorded as to how the actual tragedy occurred. It appears from lobby conversations that at the time when the tragedy took place, Sir Harisingh Gour ran in panic out into the lobby and closed himself in the bath-room. Another Muslim M.L.A. took shelter behind an almirah. Sir John Simon ran from the President's gallery and took shelter in the Assembly Superintendent's Room. There are other stories told also of some official members getting under desks, others crawling out to the lobbies. But it appears that Pandit Motilal Nehru, Mr. Crerar and Sir George Schuster were among the few who stood unmoved.

Sir Harisingh Gour has left for Nagpur; B. K. Dutt's antecedents

The police today made thorough enquiries in the city regarding the possible places the two accused may have resided on their arrival a few days ago in Delhi. Every hotel was searched, but no satisfactory information could be obtained. It appears, however, that some trace has been found of Mr. Butukeshwar Dutt now. According to the enquiries made by the Police he is probably the same person who under the name of Mr. B. K. Dutt came to Delhi in the beginning of January this year with the purpose evidently of appearing in the I.C.S. examination. He stopped at the Maharaja Hotel, the Manager of which Hotel confessed that the photo of the accused had great likeness to the supposed B. K. Dutt who stayed in the hotel in January. The signatures of B. K. Dutt in the hotel form was compared with the signatures of the accused and both have been kept for further identification. B. K. Dutt, if the present accused is the same individual, it appears from the form, is a resident of Ranchi. He left Calcutta, according to information available, fifteen days ago and came to Delhi four or five days back via Banaras and Cawnpore.

Remand for fourteen days

The police have obtained remand for fourteen days, and it is understood, the case is being investigated among others, by Mr. Jenkinson and Rai Bahadur Bhagwan Das of the Imperial C.I.D. The theory that the present accused have something to do with the

Saunders' murder is being seriously developed. It is understood that the pistol used in the present case and found on the person, it is alleged, of accused Bhagat Singh was of a bore equal to that of the one which was used in the Saunders' murder. But it is not reliably known how far the police have succeeded in investigating this theory. Bhagat Singh is now in the ordinary lock-up of the Kotwali and is being strongly guarded. B. K. Dutt is being kept in the European lock-up at the New Delhi Police Station. B. K. Dutt, it is understood, is being afforded all necessary facilities for the time being but is being strongly guarded. Attempts to secure any further information from both the accused have, however, failed.

(iii) *THE HINDU*

DATAILED ACCOUNT OF OUTRAGE

(From our own Correspondent)

April 8, 1929

"Now that the Trade Disputes Bill is out of the way, I now proceed to give my ruling regarding the Public Safety Bill". Hardly had President Patel uttered these words, and was proceeding to read his twelve-page typed statement when two bombs exploded in quick succession followed by two revolver shots in the Assembly Chamber. Panic ensued and a stampede followed. The Chamber was thick with smoke, and amid noise and excitement two comparatively young self-composed countenances stood up in the gallery next to the Ladies' Section with two police constables and a small excited group of visitors around. "I have done my duty to the country", one of them is reported to have explained adding "look, here is my revolver,". He was at once disarmed and arrested and his comrade also surrendered himself to the police.

There is no trace of any visitors' tickets having been issued to either of the young men arrested. They had evidently taken possession of seats in the gallery before any one came in the morning. The arms with which they had equipped themselves were deadly enough, although fortunately and almost miraculously none was killed. The bombs were of an inferior make and they had, it is alleged, kept them wrapped and were sitting for one full hour and a half. They watched the proceedings of the Trade Disputes Bill. They heard Sir B. N. Mitra's reply to the third reading, followed the division scenes and heard the result in favour of the Bill by 18 votes, and also the Official Benches' cheers. Every one was anxious to hear President Patel. He rose quietly from his chair, and no sooner had he uttered the words quoted above, than the scenes I have mentioned occurred in bewildering rapidity.

Sir John Simon from the President's Gallery on the left, and the ladies from their galleries were literally dumb-founded. Sir John Simon had come to hear the President's ruling, which it was well-known was against the progress of the Public Safety Bill so long as the Meerut trials were on. Some heaved a sigh of relief that after all the long-drawn-out session was to come to an end by the Presidential ruling. But the bombshell, the real bombshell came; and the President after ten minutes, during which interval he had consulted Mr. Crerar, adjourned the sitting till Thursday.

This adjournment till Thursday enables the Trade Disputes Bill to be passed in the Council of State and brought back with such amendments as that House considers necessary.

So, the Assembly stands adjourned till Thursday. What will Mr. Patel do asked some today in the lobbies? I am in a position to state that his ruling will not in the least undergo change, because of today's deplorable incidents. The only change will be perhaps an expression of sincere regret as a preface to the statement barring discussion of the Public Safety Bill.

Postponement of Public Safety Bill likely

So far as the Assembly is concerned the Public Safety Bill is as good as postponed. What the Government will do, whether they will adopt the subterfuge of a dilatory motion and thereby try indirectly to challenge the ruling or adopt the more easy course of accepting the ruling and promulgating an ordinance or whether there will be an immediate prorogation followed by an immediate convening of the new session, these are speculations for the moment in the lobbies. But whatever happens it is regarded as certain that Mr. Patel will, after his ruling, adjourn the House *sine die*. It is also likely that, considering the excitement and danger to life that was threatened in today's outrage, the Government might, in public interests, favourably consider the proposal of postponing consideration of the Bill till the Simla session and be content with having passed the Trade Disputes Bill.

For the moment, considerable excitement prevails here. This was somewhat reflected in an incident which happened in the lobbies soon after the outrage. Mr. Graham, Member of the Council of State and Mr. K. C. Roy had a wordy skirmish. Mr. Roy was taking his assistant into the Chamber to view the scene fully. Mr. Graham standing in the lobbies prevented any one from getting in. Anglo-Indian journalists had however been allowed earlier. Mr. Graham remarked angrily: "You get away" to which Mr. Roy retorted, "You go to the devil". By the time this altercation concluded, enough was seen by the enterprising journalist to write his copy. It took more than an hour for normal conditions to be restored after the bomb outrage.

* * * * *

There were traces of blood noticed near the Notice-Room of the Assembly immediately after the outrage, but as to who was responsible for it none could say. There were innumerable fragments of bombs in several parts of the Chamber and galleries as a result of the explosion.

Many members who had booked their journeys this afternoon left as arranged. These include Sir Harisingh Gour, Mr. M. C. Raja, Mr. A. Rangaswami Iyengar and Mr. Srinivasa Iyengar. Pandit Moti Lal Nehru is staying on. He may go on a short visit to Agra, and

return by Wednesday evening. There have been many telephone calls today from Simla, Lahore, Jullundur, Bombay, Calcutta, Allahabad and other places asking for details of the bomb outrage.

Both the accused wore khaki shirts. Bhagat Singh is a tall handsome figure with a hat on. Butukeshwar Dutt is a short statured thick set man. It is reported that both were rather familiar faces in the galleries for some days past, but how they have been getting admission in the gallery is a mystery.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING

(From our own Correspondent)

New Delhi, April 9, 1929

Emergency meeting of the Viceroy's Executive Council is in session at the Viceregal lodge since half-past nine this morning considering the situation caused by yesterday's bomb outrage and the future of the Public Safety Bill in view of the certain ruling by President Patel against the discussion.

• • • • •

(IV) *THE TIMES OF INDIA*

New Delhi, April 8, 1929

(From Special Correspondent)

Several persons injured

Sir George Schuster, Sir Bomanji Dalal, Mr. Raghavendra Rau and Mr. Shankar Rau were injured, Mr. S. N. Roy, Deputy Secretary of the Indian Central Committee, who was sitting in the Officers' Gallery was hit by a piece of bomb. Sir George Schuster was wounded in the right arm. A splinter cut through his shirt and coat and caused a wound, not deep. Sir Bomanji Dalal was wounded in the right thigh. Evidently it was a large piece of metal which caused the wound right down to the muscles. It was about three inches long and one inch wide and in close proximity to the femoral artery. His wound was serious and his condition is reported to be grave. Both his wound and that of Sir G. Schuster were dressed by Col. Gidney and Dr. Reinhold, Civil Surgeon, Delhi. Sir B. Dalal was sent to hospital. Mr. S. N. Roy was hurt in the two fingers of his right arm. The injuries of Mr. Raghavendra Rau and Mr. Shankar Rau are slight. Many other members had a narrow escape.

The bombs smashed benches and tables and made a deep hole on the floor. The bombs are reported to have been countrymade and of the jam-tin variety, which are said to have been common in France. Though they caused a loud explosion, it is stated that they were not capable of causing much damage.

Thrown at Government Benches

The men who threw them evidently desired to injure only persons on the Government benches of the House, because one bomb was thrown right in front of the first Treasury Bench and another behind the Treasury block where the Official Whip usually takes his seat. Of the two men arrested one is a hefty fellow and was dressed in khaki shorts. The other wore the dress common to college students in the Punjab and is said to be a student of a Lahore college. It is alleged that the person in khaki shorts first shouted "*Bande Mataram*" and then hurled the bomb straight down at an angle of 45 degrees. Those near them in the public galleries narrate that the other first pulled the pin and thereafter lobbed it off.

The fellow in shorts was seen by some of the visitors in the Public Galleries to be moving about quite restlessly on Saturday last, when it was expected President Patel would give his ruling on the Public

Safety Bill. No one, however, can account why the bombs were hurled, not after President's ruling had been given, but when he commenced to read it. The police are investigating the matter. The general opinion among members of the House is that this dastardly attack was a premeditated one.

* * * * *

The Assembly Galleries

The Public Gallery in the Assembly is horseshoe shaped and directly faces the President. It can easily accommodate five hundred persons. It is flanked on one side by the Ladies' and Distinguished Visitors' Galleries and on the other by the Council of State and the President's Galleries. In a straight line directly above the President's dais, running from the President's Gallery on the left to the Distinguished Visitors' Gallery on the right, and facing the Public Gallery, is the Press Gallery.

Tickets of admission to the galleries can only be obtained through a member of the Assembly who assumes responsibility for the visitor's good behaviour. Regular visitors have to renew these tickets every day, as tickets issued for one day not hold good for the next.

Sir George Schuster's seat is fifth on the Government front bench to the President's right, the first four seats being occupied by Mr. Crerar (Leader of the House), Sir B. L. Mitter (Law Member), Sir Bhupendra Nath Mitra (Industries Member) and Sir George Rainy (Commerce Member).

Sir Bomanji Dalal usually sits on the second back bench on the Government side, close to Sir George Schuster.

BOMB OUTRAGE IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY: BOMB OUTRAGE BY COMMUNISTS IN THE ASSEMBLY; FINANCE MEMBER AND SIR B. DALAL INJURED.

Panic in Chamber: Second bomb thrown on members fleeing at first explosion

TWO MEN ARRESTED: POLICE POSTED TO GUARD HOUSE DAY AND NIGHT

April 9, 1929

Two bombs were thrown one after another in the Legislative Assembly on Monday soon after midday from the Visitors' Galleries among the Government benches. Several members were injured including Sir George Schuster who was injured in the arm and Sir Bomanji Dalal, who was seriously injured on the thigh and is at present in hospital. His condition is reported to be grave.

The bombs were thrown just after the Assembly had passed the Trade Disputes Bill and the President had risen to give his ruling on the Public Safety Bill. Scarcely had he uttered a word when the explosion occurred. Panic prevailed, members rushing out of the Chamber. A second bomb was then hurled, both having been thrown on the Treasury Benches. The police at once closed all doors and two persons were arrested and removed to the lock-up. They said they would make their statements in court.

The members returned to the Chamber fifteen minutes later from the lobbies where they had taken refuge. The hall was full of smoke and the President adjourned the House till Thursday. Members remained in the lobbies discussing the incident. All, including the extremists, were most indignant at the outrage. * * * * *

It is reported that hereafter admission to the Visitors' Galleries will be strictly regulated.

(v) *THE STATESMAN*

(From Special Correspondent).

April 8, 1929

A most audacious outrage was perpetrated in the Legislative Assembly today at the moment the Trade Disputes Bill was declared passed and when Mr. Patel was about to rise to give his ruling on the Public Safety Bill.

It was the alleged deed of two youths—one from the Punjab and the other from Bengal. They threw two bombs in quick succession and fired two or three revolver shots.

Five members in the Chamber and one official in the Officers' Box were injured.

Sir Bomanji Dalal, the most silent member of the Assembly, received somewhat serious injuries on the right thigh. Sir George Schuster, near whose seat the first bomb fell, escaped luckily.

A relieving feature of the tragedy was that none lost their lives and Sir Bomanji Dalal, who was taken to the Hindu Rao Hospital is reported to be progressing well, though suffering from serious wounds.

Messrs. P. R. Rau and Shankar Rau, who were slightly injured, were also attended to at once. Mr. K. C. Roy, who sat next to Mr. P. R. Rau, had a narrow escape.

There was a stampede following the explosion and the galleries were fast emptying when revolver shots were fired by one of the accused. He was at once disarmed and without much ado both accused surrendered.

All this happened from the right Gallery. Sir John Simon and Mr. Hartshorn saw the outrage from the President's gallery opposite.

* * * * *

Approached by a pressman, accused, who were absolutely calm and self-composed, one of them even smiling, declared:—

“Don't cross-examine me. You will hear a lot of our army in court.”

Both accused, by their alleged confession of the “outrage”, eased the task of the police, who were promptly on the scene.

Visitors' Dash

For fifteen minutes after the outrage there was nothing but confusion and scenes of intense excitement.' Visitors ran to the Central Library Hall or to any safe room, while the Chamber cleared quickly and the lobbies were full of excited chatter.

* * * * *

Speeches condemning the dastardly outrage will be made before the President's ruling on the Safety Bill is given. But the Lobbies are of the view that if ever there was a need of passing the Public Safety Bill that was evidenced in today's deeds.

And yet Mr. Patel is expected to stick to his reading of the rules and Standing Orders and prevent the Bill being taken into consideration.

(vi) STATEMENTS AND PRESS COMMENTS

SIR DARCY LINDSAY said; such an incident was a catastrophe to India and demonstrated the very grave danger of inflaming the undeveloped mind of youth by speeches.

PANDIT MALAVIYA characterized the event as shocking and deplorable.

DEWAN CHAMAN LALL, Labour leader, said it was a dastardly crime against the Nationalist movement itself. "Everything should be done to take the strongest measures against acts of violence which make us hide our heads in shame", he declared.

C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR: "The news of the outrage in the Legislative Assembly today is calculated profoundly to shock as well as to startle all those who have at heart the cause of constitutional progress and orderly development. There is no doubt that during the past few years and especially during the last year or two, there have been many symptoms of reckless disregard for life and concerted attempts at what is called direct action. While not anxious to dogmatise on these points, one cannot help feeling that the influence of communistic doctrines and Bolshevik theories of life is responsible for these manifestations which are wholly foreign to the spirit of Indian civilisation and its genius. The occasion as well as the details of the outrage are particularly lamentable and the sympathies of every right-minded person would go out to those who suffered at the hands of the dastardly perpetrators.

"Nevertheless, it is not out of place to hope and trust that these events will not deflect a high-minded administrator like Lord Irwin from the path on which it is believed he has set himself and that no panicky steps or measures will be contemplated in spite of provocation."

DR. ANNIE BESANT: "I look on it as one of those foolish and criminal attempts which can only tend to discredit those who are working for reform in legitimate ways. I consider that the granting of Dominion Status to India is vitally necessary if England and India are to remain in alliance as I hope they will. I have often urged that the granting of self-governing powers identical with those enjoyed by Canada and the other self-governing Dominions is necessary to the welfare of both countries. So long as Britain and India remain in friendly alliance a war of colour between Europe and Asia is most unlikely, if not impossible. As was pointed out last year in a remarkable book entitled "The Revolt of Asia", the Asiatic countries are becoming more and more irritated by the treatment given to them by

the European powers. China is now definitely on the way to orderly Government and can no longer be exploited by Europe as she has been. There are signs of rapprochement between Russia and Afghanistan and it seems likely that King Amanulla will soon regain his throne. He has probably been somewhat rash in forcing reforms too quickly on his subjects and if he adds a little patience to his strength, Afghanistan will certainly become a strong power in Asia. It is clear that Asia is becoming self-conscious and that she recognises that likenesses between Asiatic countries are greater than the differences. If India becomes a fully self-governing Dominion, she will form a link between Asia and Europe. But her complete internal freedom is necessary so that she may develop on her own lines and not be interfered with by foreigners. If the union of progressive parties in India is happily accomplished, as we hope, India will become again the great nation that she was in the past. Hindu-Muslim quarrels are found almost exclusively in what is called British India and not in the states ruled by Indian Princes. Peace can only be preserved by recognising the changed conditions of Asiatic feeling. A mad act like the throwing of bombs is a symptom that attempts are being made to provoke conflict between Asia and Europe and all people who consider peace necessary to progress should definitely and openly express their condemnation of all such crimes."

MR. G. A. NATESAN: "I was shocked to hear the news of this dastardly outrage in the Assembly. All those who are interested in the progress and orderly development of our country must condemn the act and I have no doubt that the Government of Lord Irwin will command the sympathy and support of all in its efforts to root out this menace. I feel it my duty to add that at the present juncture there is need for the "statesman's insight, wisdom and courage" and I venture to recall to public memory what Lord Minto said on a similar occasion:

"No anarchical crime will deter me from endeavouring to meet, as best as I can, the political aspirations of honest reformers."

HIS HIGHNESS THE MAHARAJA OF BIKANER who was on a visit to Bombay, was shocked to learn the news of the bomb outrage in the Assembly. His Highness sent a message to Sir George Schuster condemning the outrage and expressing abhorrence of the senseless and dastardly act.

MR. G. W. CHAMBERS, Chairman of the Madras Branch of the European Association, very much deplored the outrage on the Parliamentary life of the country. It seemed to him that freedom of speech in the Assembly led to licence and recklessness among certain misguided people and he could only hope that no further ill-effects would follow.

"THE STATESMAN": Writing under the caption, "Bomb Argument", *The Statesman* says that it is a crime of a type which by no

stretch of language can be called political. It should excite the indignation of every man of every party, for the intention is simply indiscriminate murder. The whole thing is as cowardly as it is wanton. For the moment, it is of importance that the people should keep their tempers calm. Naturally, man thinks first of the punishment in such circumstances and reprisals. But the essential is that a spirit of revenge shall not be allowed to take its course. There is no occasion for panicky measures. It may prove that the Government is faced by a new and formidable conspiracy relying on violent measures. If so, it can be met and crushed. The assassins will not be allowed to prevail.

“THE ENGLISHMAN”: The bomb may convince where the argument failed to carry conviction. On the other hand it is quite likely that violence may make the President of the Legislative Assembly still more stubborn and obstinate. The Government have, however, a clear duty. Word-spinnings and doctrinaires and pedants must no longer be allowed to obstruct the safety of the State. It is time we venture to state that truce be made with politics and that a more robust spirit should animate the Government.

“THE FORWARD”: It may be safely asserted that the person or persons responsible for the crime have done the greatest service to the sworn enemies of Indian aspirations and have strengthened the hands of the reactionaries, who are out for a resolute Government and delight in nothing so much as in pursuing a policy of ruthlessness.

“AMRITA BAZAR PATRIKA”: Public opinion will strongly condemn the outrage, for it is nothing less than that, though it might have been easily more dangerous. Two persons are said to have been arrested in this connection with pistols and revolvers. We trust there will be impartial investigation and the whole truth will come out in connection with this unfortunate incident.

“THE BENGALEE” writes that it would fervently appeal to the Government of India not to let their judgement run away with feelings of the moment, and, while doing everything possible to maintain law and order, not to do anything that might savour of repression or reprisals.

(B)

EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNTS FROM OFFICIALS OF THE
FORMER LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DEPARTMENT

(i) *Letter dated 22nd May, 1958, from Rai Bahadur D. Dutt—Retired Assistant Secretary, Legislative Assembly Department*

After a lapse of about thirty years it is very difficult to remember what actually happened on the fateful 8th of April, 1929.* * * * * However, I give below for what it is worth a brief narration of the incident so far as I can remember.

The news that President Patel would give his ruling on the Public Safety Bill spread like wild fire throughout Delhi, and naturally there was a tremendous rush for admission to the galleries. Applications for cards came pouring in from all quarters, members, non-members, officials—all and sundry. Poor Pertab Chand, Robinson and others were hard pressed and had the time of their life. All the galleries—Visitors' Ladies', Distinguished Visitors' and Official—were crowded from floor to ceiling. Even the Lobbies and Corridors were crowded. In fact all vantage point was taken up. Extra chairs had to be placed in the galleries and extra police force had to be deployed. There was one seething mass of humanity, humming and buzzing. At 11 of the clock the Marshal announced the President and immediately all chattering, humming and buzzing ceased. There was pin-drop silence—lull before the storm. The Question hour—dull and monotonous—passed off without a ripple of excitement. The Trade Disputes Bill was then taken up and voted upon—I am writing from memory—I think it was the Trade Disputes Bill. The President—always calm and dignified—then rose and addressed the House: "As the Trade Disputes Bill is now out of the way I now propose to give my ruling on." (he could not continue). At this stage the whole House was startled by a loud explosion followed in quick succession by pistol shots and another loud explosion. The President and all of us instinctively stood up, dazed at the outrage. Two bombs were thrown from the Visitors' Gallery and burst among the benches occupied by official and nominated members. There was wild stampede in the Visitors' Gallery and panic among some of the back benchers who made their hurried exit.

There was also a comic side of it. Poor Kabir-ud-din Ahmed made an unsuccessful attempt to dive under the bench. Be it said to the credit of the President and official members and bulk of the members of the Congress Party (Swaraj) that they remained calm and unruffled. The President tried to restore order but in view of the din and confusion that prevailed he retired and resumed the Chair after a few minutes and then adjourned the House.

As a result of the throwing of bombs several members were injured including the Finance Member and a Parsi Knight or Bart. whose names I cannot recall. The last bench below the Distinguished

Visitors' Gallery was smashed to smithereens. Fortunately there were no members sitting at the time—they had all moved forward to hear the President's ruling. The pistol shots hit the marble pillar of the Official Gallery—splinters injuring a few of the occupants. Some of the ladies in the Ladies Gallery received injuries from the flying splinters of the bombs.

Under the President's orders I immediately rushed to the Visitors' Gallery to render such aid to the police as they required. The two miscreants, Bhagat Singh and Butukeshwar Dutt, quietly surrendered to the police. Butukeshwar was still holding a pistol but he dropped it as the police approached. The whole place was immediately cordoned off and no one was allowed to enter or leave the building. A Committee Room was placed at the disposal of the police for the detention of the culprits pending the arrival of senior police officials. The police searched the bodies of Singh and Dutt and also of those who were sitting nearby. None of them was in possession of admission cards. Probably they all had gate-crashed.

(ii) *Letter dated 10th May, 1958, from Shri Bisheshwar Nath, Retired Editor of Parliamentary Debates*

On the eventful 8th of April, 1929, the Assembly Chamber was very much overcrowded. The Visitors' and other galleries were full and the Members of the House were also present in large number due to the very controversial measures before the House. There was pin-drop silence. I was listening to the Debate in the Official Gallery which was very much overcrowded. Many officers were standing for want of sufficient seating accommodation. Mr. S. N. Roy, I.C.S., Deputy Secretary, Home Department, was also standing with his left hand resting on the granite pillar of the gallery. I was standing just behind Mr. Roy.

All of a sudden there was a loud noise like a gun fire and the Chamber was full of smoke. Immediately after there was another such noise and I clearly observed a flash coming from the Visitors' Gallery in front. There was confusion in the Chamber and the galleries and the Members as well as the visitors were trying to get away. I noticed Mr. Roy's finger bleeding and pointed it out to him. Evidently some splinter from the bomb or the pistol bullet had struck the granite pillars when Mr. Roy's left hand was resting. It was discovered later on that a small chip had fallen off the pillar.

I also left the gallery immediately and on reaching the outer door I found the Government Whip rushing out and shouting that the gates should be closed, I also ran towards the gate and had them closed but observed that a number of people had already gone out.

All this must have taken a very few minutes and on return to the Official Box I found that Sir Bomanji Dalal, a member of the House was lifted up and was being carried out of the House by some Members. I observed that some of the desks in the Chamber, especially the front ones, were damaged and were out of alignment.

After some time we heard that some persons were detained by the police in one of the rooms upstairs. I with some others went up and found two persons detained by the police in one of the rooms. On going inside the room we found one rather tall and well built person (Shri Bhagat Singh) and the other a rather short man (Mr. Dutt) standing in the room in charge of the police. One of us questioned Shri Bhagat Singh as to his motives in throwing the bomb. He did not reply and he kept silent but when the question was repeated he simply said that we would not understand these matters.

*Lord Irwin's Farewell speech at the Chelmsford Club**

(EXTRACT)

* * * * *

I can well believe that our action has at this juncture been a real difficulty for Mr. Gandhi and those associated with him, and I owe it to Indian opinion generally that I should take this opportunity, in a few words, of placing them in clear possession of my own thought.

I take full responsibility for the decision at which Government arrived. I know no heavier responsibility that rests upon the shoulders of a Viceroy than the decision of whether he should or should not make use of his special power by way of commutation or remission of sentences.

As I listened the other day to Mr. Gandhi putting the case for commutation forcibly before me I reflected, first, of what significance it surely was that the apostle of non-violence should so earnestly be pleading the cause of devotees of a creed so fundamentally opposite to his own. I reflected also upon the quality of the responsibility that falls on those in whose hands it lies and whose duty it is to decide finally whether their fellow men should live or die. And I am free to confess that I should frankly regard that responsibility as an intolerable one to any man to support, unless he guided his conduct by adherence to certain very clear and definite principles.

First of all, he must satisfy himself that no facts have been brought to his notice which were not before the sentencing tribunals and which might suggest a possible miscarriage of justice. There was nothing of this sort in this case, and it is significant that none of the petitions in any form, directly or indirectly suggested that the prisoners were other than guilty of the crimes alleged against them. For the rest, I conceive it right that I should have regard, in the exercise of clemency, to the actual merits, as I can judge them, of the case before me. But I should regard it as wholly wrong to allow my judgement on these matters to be influenced or deflected by purely political considerations.

I am well aware of the interest taken by large numbers of people in the fate of Bhagat Singh. But I could discover no argument by which commutation of that sentence could have been justified that would not have involved, if justice was to be equal, the commutation of all other sentences involving the death penalty. For I could

*Speeches by Lord Irwin 1929-31 Vol. II, pp. 362-64.

imagine no case in which, under the law, the penalty had been more directly deserved. I have seen it suggested in the Press that, even supposing commutation was impossible, it was highly undesirable that the executions should take place on the eve of the Congress meeting at Karachi. I was fully alive to these considerations, and I will state with complete frankness the principal reason which led me to think the suggestion of postponement was not one that my Government could possibly accept.

To suggest to Congress that there was after all a chance that the sentence would be remitted, whereas I should have in my own mind been clear that the sentence must be carried out as soon as the Congress had concluded, seemed to me—as it would have to you—a wholly indefensible proceeding. I am quite prepared to think that it would have made the immediate atmosphere at Karachi easier, but only at the cost of enabling Congress to say with justice that it had been treated by the Viceroy and by the Government with complete lack of candour.

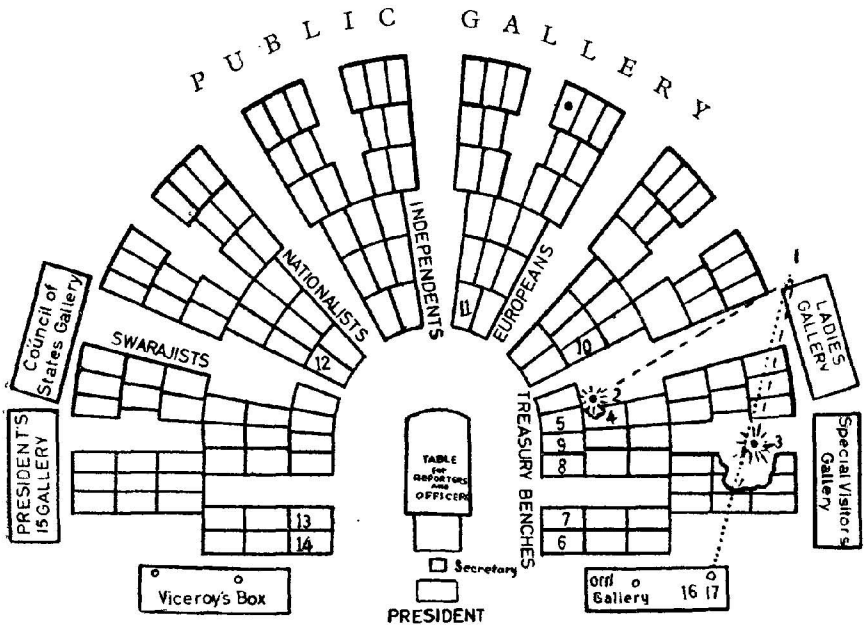
* * * * *

VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Legislative Assembly Debates, 1929	.. Vols. I to IV
Legislative Assembly Debates, 1930	.. Vol. I
The Indian Quarterly Register (Mitra), 1928	.. Vols. I & II
The Indian Quarterly Register (Mitra), 1929	.. Vols. I & II
The Indian Annual Register (Mitra), 1930	.. Vols. I & II
‘Mahatma’ by D. G. Tendulkar	.. Vol. 2, pp. 470—73; Vol. 3—p. 92
“Fullness of Days” by the Earl of Halifax	.. Page 149
Speeches by Lord Irwin, 1929—31	.. Vol. II, pp. 362—364.

PLAN OF SEATING LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY CHAMBER NEW DELHI

As on the 8th April, 1929.



11. Sir Darcy Lindsay.
12. Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya
13. Pt. Motilal Nehru, Leader of the Opposition.
14. Maulvi Muhammad Yakub (Dy. President, Legislative Assembly).
15. Sir John Simon, Chairman, Indian Statutory Commission.
16. Mr. S. N. Roy in the Official Gallery.
17. Column in the Official Gallery hit by a bullet.

1. Bhagat Singh and Butukeshwar Dutt.
2. First Bomb.
3. Second Bomb.
4. Sir Bomanji Dalal.
5. Sir George Schuster (Finance Member).
6. Mr. J. Crerar (Leader of the House).
7. Sir B. N. Mitter (Law Member).
8. Sir Bhupendra Nath Mitra (Industries Member).
9. Sir George Rainy (Commerce Member).
10. Mr. P. R. Rau.

PRINTED AT THE PARLIAMENTARY WING OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA PRESS,
NEW DELHI AND PUBLISHED BY THE LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT UNDER RULE
382 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE AND CONDUCT OF BUSINESS IN
LOK SABHA (FIFTH EDITION.)
