

BRITAIN'S ROYAL WEEKA PARLIAMENT OPENS - A PRESIDENT ARRIVES

Led by the Household Cavalry, the Irish State Coach sweeps through the gates of Buckingham Palace to take the King and Queen, along a route lined by the Brigade of Guards, to Westminster. So opens an historic week, gay in colour, rich in tradition. Reinforced by the greatest influx of visitors for more than a decade, Londoners turn out in their thousands to cheer the Royal procession on its way up the Mall, brilliant with streamers.

Before the King's arrival, the Yeomen of the Guard prepare for their traditional search of the Houses of Parliament - a custom dating back 300 years, to the eventful period of Guy Fawkes. Today, with the Government in office on a razor-edged majority, the symptoms of the gunpowder plot seem to be present again, though in a milder and more subtle form. The new session may become almost as explosive as Mr. Fawkes intended. Although first skirmishes indicate a longer Parliamentary life than was at first expected, the date of the next State Opening is topic No. 1, as peers mingle with distinguished guests at the Lords' entrance.

The National Anthem heralds the arrival of the Royal coach in Parliament Square. The ceremonial dates back centuries, but to those who watch, it is ever again fresh.

At this, his first state opening of a new Parliament, His Majesty announces proposals for seven new bills - none of them described as "controversial." As the greys swing up to the entrance of the House of Lords, the atmosphere of an approaching election is intermingled with the pageantry of history.

At night, the colourful pageantry gives way to a blaze of lights, as the capital gives a pre-view to a week of celebration. Bathed in a brilliant array, this great heart of an empire assumes a new grandeur.

Twelve hours later the spotlight switches across the Channel. The President of France - Monsieur Vincent Auriol - and his wife - leave Calais aboard the s.s. "Arromanches" for Dover, and a three-day state visit to Britain. Escorted by Vampire jets, the presidential ship is welcomed into British territorial waters by the battleship "Vanguard." It is indeed a happy choice that "Arromanches" makes this historic trip. It was at Arromanches that the first British

troops went ashore on D-Day to set off the liberation of France. It was there that France was reborn and the alliance between our two nations sealed anew in blood.

At Dover, to welcome the President to Britain, is the Duke of Gloucester - representing the King. Almost eleven years have passed since a President of France has visited this country. Since then, both nations have suffered at the hands of the same enemy. Through the years of sacrifice, the flame of Anglo-French unity has endured, to burn brighter than ever on this day.

Accompanied by the Duke of Gloucester, M. Auriol inspects the guard of honour, a Royal Naval contingent and a detachment from the Royal West Kents.

At Dover's Marine station, the crowds see, for the first time, Madame Auriol - the First Lady of France. Dressed in one of the creations specially designed for the state visit, the President's wife joins her husband aboard the special train. Driving them to Victoria is a veteran of the railways - John Durrant - an engine driver for nearly 50 years.

At Victoria, the King and Queen lead the nation's welcome to the guests from France. There, too, are Princess Elizabeth and the Princess Royal. With the Prime Minister is Earl Wavell, Lord Lieutenant of London. Unhappily missing from this distinguished assembly is Princess Margaret, who was taken ill earlier in the day. Two minutes ahead of time, the presidential train draws in - having successfully driven through the fog that envelopes London and the suburbs. Stepping forward to greet the visitors, the King and Queen make their welcomes in French. On red-carpeted Victoria Station, a handshake between friends cements anew the Entente Cordiale.

While Their Majesties and the President had not met before, Princess Elizabeth had been a guest at M. Auriol's Palace during her visit to France two years ago.

Accompanying the President is Foreign Minister Robert Schumann, who during his stay in London, will meet Government leaders for discussions on the Saar. For although M. Auriol's visit is primarily an occasion for gaiety and celebration, there is a sterner purpose: to effect a still closer understanding between our two nations.

The man London welcomes today as France's head of state had been in Britain before as one of the leaders of the French Resistance. That's one of the reasons why London's greeting to Monsieur and Madame Auriol is such a personal one. It's a

welcome to war-time friends. And at the same time, it is Britain's salute to France - to her neighbour, her ally, her friend. As the royal landaus draw away into the fog, London's greetings speak for the nation. The cheers of the thousands, many of whom had waited since dawn, cut through the dullness of this grey March day to make it an occasion that will always be remembered.

Trafalgar Square is the scene of another great ovation for the President and the King.

It's cheers all the way as Monsieur Auriol nears Buckingham Palace - his home for the coming three days. Here's proof, if proof were still needed, that never has the Entente Cordiale, founded by King Edward VII, been stronger than in the reign of King George VI. For France and Britain are today linked in a great union of free people. In the lights that have come up again to celebrate this joyous week are reflected the common aims that bind in unity France and Britain.