

Large-Scale Preparations for Belinsky Centenary

ON JUNE 7, the peoples of the Soviet Union will observe the centenary of the death of Vissarion Belinsky, eminent Russian thinker, critic and revolutionary democrat.

"The Belinsky anniversary will be commemorated all over the country," Professor N. Belchikov, secretary of the all-Union centenary committee, which includes scientists, writers, critics and

public figures from all the Union republics, told Moscow News in an interview. "Lectures and literary evenings dedicated to the life and work of this remarkable representative of Russian culture will be held in schools, colleges, workers' clubs, libraries and reading rooms in literally every corner of the land and will be attended by millions of people of all ages, professions and nationalities. Throughout May and the beginning of June all the newspapers, beginning with the central and ending with village and factory papers, have been carrying articles and features about the great critic. The members of the centenary committee which was set up by decision of the Council of Ministers of the USSR last December never imagined that the preparations for commemorating the Belinsky centenary would assume such tremendous proportions. Belinsky is today closer to the people than ever before."

Explaining the universal interest in this great man, the professor said that Belinsky had played a leading role in the development of Russian letters. He was an educator and mentor of writers. He was the first to point to the historical significance of Russian literature, to give it a theoretical foundation that was extremely progressive in his time, and to chart its future path. In

his articles and essays Belinsky "discovered" such now famous men of letters as Gogol, the great satirist, and Nekrasov, the poet, and wrote many critical essays on the works of Pushkin, Lermontov, Turgenev, Goncharov and Dostoyevsky. His literary credo, which rejected so-called "pure art" and "art for art's sake," and propounded the need for a literature replete with lofty ideals and social significance, has lost none of its meaning and purport today. Only of a few of the greatest figures in the history of the development of social thought can the same be said.

"Russian literature has transcended all national boundaries," Professor Belchikov went on. "It has contributed gems of inestimable value to the treasure-house of world culture as the indefatigable champion of the lofty ideals of progress, democracy and humanism. The finest works of Russian literature have been accepted by all freedom-loving peoples. The names and works of Pushkin and Turgenev, Nekrasov and Belinsky, Chekhov and Tolstoi are known and appreciated by the mountaineers of the Caucasus, the grape growers of Moldavia, the cotton pickers of Central Asia and the fishermen of the Baltic. It is the distinguishing trait of national Socialist culture that it accepts all the best and most progressive that human thought has created

through the centuries. Soviet men and women consider themselves heirs to the cultural heritage of their nations and all mankind. That explains why the Belinsky anniversary is being as widely marked all over the country as was the quincentenary a month ago of the birth of the great Uzbek poet Navoi and the jubilee of Nizami, the 12th-century Azerbaijan poet, last year. In addition to their great talents, all three men held progressive views for their time and were enlighteners of the people."

Belinsky's conscious life was lived in the 30's and 40's of last century, the professor continued. This was one of the darkest periods in the history of the Russian people, the period of tsarist domination and unbridled reaction. As a revolutionary democrat, a courageous fighter for the welfare of the people and the progress of his native land, Belinsky bitterly opposed autocracy, serfdom, social oppression. His passionate nature and brilliant mind won Belinsky the support of the young generation of his epoch. The young people of his time eagerly read everything he wrote in contemporary magazines. Belinsky's profound philosophical ideas helped to mold their world outlook.

"In pre-revolutionary years bourgeois scholars went out of their way to gloss over the revolutionary democratic essence of Belinsky's work. His famous 'Letter to Gogol,' for example, which Lenin called one of the 'finest works of the non-censored democratic press,' was practically never published in tsarist Russia."

On the eve of the centenary a three-volume collection of Belinsky's works was put out in an edition of 300,000 copies.

The first complete collection of Belinsky's writings, in 13 volumes, will be off the press this year, and a complete academic collection of his works is being prepared for the press by the Academy of Sciences.

"It is difficult to enumerate all of the books written by Belinsky and about him that have been published on the occasion of the centenary," said the professor. "There are two volumes of selected philosophical writings put out by the State Publishing House of Political Literature: a volume of selected pedagogical writings, published by the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the RSFSR, and biographies of Belinsky put out in huge editions in many languages of the Soviet peoples, to mention but a few. The total circulation of books published for the Belinsky centenary is upwards of one million."

Monuments to Belinsky are to be erected in Moscow and Leningrad, your correspondent learned, and busts of the critic are to be set up in Penza and Chembary, two towns where his early youth was spent. The Central Documentary Film Studio has released a film about the life of Belinsky.

Hundreds of exhibitions illustrating the life and work of the great Russian critic have been opened to the public and centenary sessions are on in numerous scientific institutions, academies and universities all over the country.

On June 7, a Belinsky memorial meeting will be held in the Bolshoi Theater of Moscow. Similar meetings are to take place the same day at the Volkovo cemetery in Leningrad and in all the capitals and big cities of the Soviet Union.

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