

INDO-SOVIET- FIRST ALL-INDIA CONGRESS OF THE F. S. U.

by A. S. R. Chari

Courage And Self-Sacrifice

THE messages printed on this page are only some of the scores of messages sent from all over India to the First Congress of the All-India Friends of the Soviet Union (A.I.F.S.U.) held at the University Convocation Hall, Bombay on June 3 and 4 under the presidency of Shrimati Vijayalakshmi Pandit.

From Congressmen, Muslim Leaguers, Nationalist Muslims, from scientists and philosophers of eminence, from writers and artists, the messages came, revealing that the bonds of friendship and goodwill between the Soviet people and ourselves are growing stronger every day.

In Bombay itself, the enthusiasm with which all sections of citizens responded to the call to enrol themselves as Reception Committee members, placed the organisers in an awkward position. No less than 1,100 people had become Reception Committee members. Hundreds more demanded to be enrolled. But the accommodation of the hall was limited and the organisers were obliged to stop further enrolment.

Over 100 delegates had come from all parts of India and two fraternal delegates Mr. Stanley Mendis and Mrs. Hedi Keuneman had come all the way from Lanka to greet the Congress.

THE hall was decorated in a simple and striking manner. Behind the dais was a portrait of Marshal Stalin inscribed with "Greetings to the Red Army." On either side of the dais were portraits of Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal, participating in spirit, if not in body, in this Session of homage to the heroic Soviet people.

A Patriotic Gathering

The hall was packed to capacity, the visitors in the galleries above being five deep. There were about 2,000 people. It was a big patriotic gathering of persons who belonged to all parties and to no party. Outside the hall were numerous persons lounging on the lawn and listening to the loud-speakers that had been installed.

Mrs. VIJAYALAKSHMI PANDIT herself an active friend of the Soviet Union said in her presidential address that:

"People all over the world had watched with increasing admiration the heroic struggle which the brave people of Russia have carried on against a powerful enemy... from our and to no Russia, we can learn lessons which may be adapted to our own needs and which will help us along the road to liberty."

Echoing the Resolution passed by the Bardoli session of the Working Committee of the National Congress (see above) she said that the Soviet Union fights not only to protect her homes, but also to save those values which thinking men all the world over had regarded as necessary for the full development of the human race. She reminded the patriotic gathering of our leaders who were behind the bars and had been thus prevented from playing their role in the struggle not only of India, but of all the peoples of the world against exploitation and domination.

The Russian Revolution

Mr. SYED ABDULLA BRELVI, Chairman of the Reception Committee, and President of the Bombay F.S.U. welcoming the delegates said that India had been deeply stirred by the great October Revolution of 1917.

"Who could deny," he asked, "that the Russian Revolution had released progressive forces throughout the world, which could not again be enchained, that it had marked a turning-point in human history?"

He referred to the abolition of exploitation, illiteracy and unemployment, and to the swift advancement in culture and arts of the entire people of the U.S.S.R. He concluded by saying that there was a great deal in the Soviet achievements which should inspire our people in their efforts to solve the numerous problems that confronted them.

Fraternal Speeches

Mr. N. M. JOSHI greeting the Congress on behalf of the All-India Trade Union Congress (A.I.

T.U.C.) said that ever since the Socialist Revolution the Soviet Union has been loved and looked upon by the working class of the whole world as a living symbol of emancipation.

Mr. B. T. RANADIVE brought greetings to the Congress on behalf of the Communist Party of India. In a rousing speech, he said that the Congress had assembled to convey the greetings of the fighters for freedom in India to their brother fighters in the Soviet Union.

He said that the Soviet leaders studied India and the great Lenin was even prepared to draw lessons from the actions of the Bombay working class as when he hailed in 1908 the political strike of the Bombay workers in protest against the deportation of the National leader Tilak. Lenin said that it signalled the birth of Indian proletarian politics.

All sections of the people in India are realising more and more that we can learn a good deal by studying the Soviets and their achievements.

He recalled how Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the moving spirit in the F.S.U. movement in I.F. and concluded amid cheers that the best way to pay our homage to our leaders who were still behind the bars, was to carry on with redoubled vigour the work which themselves had begun when they were free.

Influence On India

Mr. K. AHMED ABBAS speaking on behalf of the Progressive Writers' and the Indian People's Theatre Associations, traced the influence that pre-and-post-revolutionary writers of Russia had on Indian writers. He cited portions from the writings of Pandit Jawaharlal and Romila Rolland in praise of the Soviets. Shostakovich's Leningrad Symphony was, he said, a supreme example of the identification between life and art that the Soviet system had brought about.

Mr. NIDHAN SINGH, Secretary of the Deshbhakti Parivar Sahayak Samiti, a veteran revolutionary of the Ghadr Party, who had spent seven years in the Soviet Union, told the audience in simple and sincere words what he had seen in the Soviet Union. He had worked in an armament factory in Tashkent and had returned to India only in 1943. Women workers felt that the machine was their battlefield and their job was to beat the Nazis there. "Parashutists will get shortshriff in Soviet land for every Soviet citizen is a 'C.I.D.' who will wait, watch and pounce on the Nazi," he said.

Fraternal greetings were delivered by Mr. Stanley Mendis (Ceylon) Poet Harindranath, Miss Shrimati Sarojini Naidu could not give any fresh message, but she had desired that the message she had given on the November

"The Soviet Union has stood for certain human, cultural and social values, which are of great importance on the road of the progress of humanity. The Working Committee consider that it would be a tragedy if the catalysis of war involved the destruction of this endeavour and achievement. They have admired the astonishing self-sacrifice and heroic courage of the Soviet in the defence of their country and freedom and send them their warm sympathy."

—Congress Working Committee Resolution passed at Bardoli, December 1941.

Anniversary should be reiterated. Deafening claps received this rousing message from her (see on the opposite page). The keynote of all the messages was admiration for the Soviet system and a desire to emulate its achievements.

Prof. HIREN MUKHERJEE, then read the report on the F.S.U. movement since its inception. He pointed out how the beginnings were laid in Bengal in the dark autumn days of 1941, when Hitler's hordes were advancing rapidly into Soviet land. The Great Tagore had then sent his blessings to the F.S.U.

From then on, the movement had spread all over India. Bengal

freedom and democracy everywhere."

Another resolution condemned Nazi vandalism and greeted the Soviet people on the task of rebuilding, which they had already begun. A third resolution emphasized the role of the F.S.U. to forge Indo-Soviet unity and understanding and appealed to all patriots to join the F.S.U.

The Resolution welcoming Gandhiji's release said:

"This All-India Congress of the F.S.U. greets with joy and relief the release of Gandhiji. We look forward to his speedy recovery and hope that it will lead to a solution of the present political deadlock and the establishment of a government representative of all sections of our people, so that India may effectively counter famine and Jap aggression and shape her future side with the Soviets and China."

It was passed amid thunderous cheers.

Another resolution welcomed the fact that the door to cultural intercourse with the Soviets had now been opened and thanked the VOKS (Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries) for sending cultural material.

Executive Elected

It was resolved that the Headquarters of the A.I.F.S.U. should be at Bombay and that a periodical organ of the A.I.F.S.U. be published from the Central Office. The Executive Committee of the A.I.F.S.U. was elected, prominent being:

President: Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. Vice-Presidents: Pt. Vallathol, (Kerala), S. A. Brelvi, (Bombay), Bhupendranath Bhat (Bengal), K. Srinivasan, Editor Hindu (Madras).

General Secretary: R. M. Jambhakar.

Joint Secretaries: Dr. Junankar (Gujarat), Prof. Hiren Mukherjee (Bengal).

Treasurer: Mr. Mahendra Shah (Gujarat).

The Reception Committee had arranged a free show of the powerful documentary film, 'Battle For Soviet Ukraine', for the delegates, Reception Committee members and distinguished visitors. Both Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit attended. The film depicting the happy Ukrainian land, the sudden attack by Nazis, its occupation and the horrors of Nazi domination, the evacuation of collective farms and the formation of guerrillas and at last its liberation by the Red Army, moved deeply both Mrs. Naidu and Mrs. Pandit.

Homage In Verse

On the evening of the 5th was a cultural Congress in which famous poets like Josh Malihabadi, Saghar Nazami, Harin Chattopadhyaya, Maqdoom, Narendra Sharma, Machwe and others took part. A magnificent poem composed by Vallathol on the desecration of Tolstoy's home by the Nazis, rousing songs of tribute to the Red Army, of hatred for the Nazis, of faith in the future of humanity were rendered. Abdur Rehman Tabassum, the worker-poet of

GOODWILL MESSAGES ALL SHADES OF PATRIOTIC

STRENGTH FROM UNITY

"THE achievements of the Soviet Union in different fields of human activity have been unique in the world's history of modern times. The prime object of the Friends of the Soviet Union is to study, appreciate and establish contacts with the cultural life of the Soviet people in the realms of literature, art and all other progressive aspects of human activity so as to make life fuller, richer and more vital. The collaboration of the Soviet Union with the other allies has already produced great results and will, I trust, in due course achieve emancipation of humanity. I wish the Congress every success."

—Syt. Bhulabhai Desai.

"AS I sit and conjure Russia, my mind is filled with the thrills of their defensive operations and the marvels of their offensive attacks.

"Russia, alone baffled Nazi expectations and dreams and is now a might more to the Nazis. Post-revolution Russia worked miracles, as though by magic, by the mass energy of resurrected humanity. They released themselves from the graveyards of thraldom and poverty.

"In Russia, revolutionary ideas were translated into mass action on a gigantic scale. Their co-ordinated achievement gave the people unique strength, both physically and intellectually..."

—B. Gopal Reddy, Congress ex-Minister, Nellore.



Mr. Bhulabhai Desai

"WE in India, have much to learn from Russia. We have to go out of our shell and to take our share in the remoulding of the world. I think we can do much if only we would act unitedly and imagine courageously. I may only hope that your Congress will be able to give us practical suggestions for our own work in the future. I know that our political and our social difficulties are very many; but just as man has made them so can man unmake them too; and we need not despair.

"In wishing your Congress every success, I should like to pay my tribute to the memory of the great builders of modern Russia, and to the courage and endurance of those who are fulfilling their mission today."

—Syt. Sri Prakash, Congress M.L.A. (Central) Benares.

FAITH TO DO LIKE

"THE transformation of oppressed, hungry, homeless and illiterate masses, who formed more than ninety per cent of the people of Russia into a well-fed, self-reliant, well educated and highly industrialised community, closely knit together by common interests, in the course of twenty years is a miracle in modern history. Such wonderful success should give us faith in our ability to do likewise in India."

—Sir Gyan Chandra Ghosh, Director of Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

Ahmedabad was received with a great ovation.

The cultural squad from Thana, led by Vasant Bhagwat rendered Marathi songs on the Soviet Union Chandalas, Swapnastha and others recited Gujarati poems. Prithviraj, the film actor also participated.

The function lasted from 6 to 10-30 p.m. and the audience enthusiastically cheered this collective tribute to the Soviets, this solid proof of how the Soviet system has been able to strike chords of sympathy, admiration and love in the hearts of all our writers and poets. The poems were replete with the will to win in spite of all obstacles and emulate the heroic peoples of the Soviet Union.

"... I AM glad to know that the Friends of Soviet Union will meet in Congress at Bombay on the 3rd June. I wish the function every success. The public achievements of Soviet Russia on the battlefields of Europe and the determination to develop on progressive democratic lines which is evident from the abolition of the Comintern and the recognition of the Orthodox Greek Church, appeal to all. If Soviet Russia is able to get the Peace Conference to implement the great aims of this war, announced by Marshal Stalin in 1942, it will be a supreme achievement of human history."

—Sir S. Radhakrishnan, Vice-Chancellor, Benares Hindu University.

"... THE greatness of Soviet Culture and the powers of her civilisation demand the tribute of entire humankind, and India will surely join with other lands in hoping that the Soviet Union will lead mankind towards peace and equality in the coming years. Freedom and reverence for life—may Soviet Russia teach us to achieve these two great ideals through economic and humane regeneration."

—Professor Amiya Chakravarty, Shantiniketan.



A section of the 2,000 audience on the Ope



Mrs. Pandit, who presided and Mr. Brelvi, Reception Committee Chairman on the Dais.

and Ceylon had their F.S.U. journals while Bombay had popularised the Soviet through exhibitions. Books and pamphlets had been published by all the F.S.U. branches. He said that the F.S.U. movement had spread and grown and the present Congress was but a sign that it had come of age, that the strong bonds of Indo-Soviet friendship had been forged. He showed how every section of the people had rallied to the call of the F.S.U. on May Day in Bengal.

Greetings To Liberators

On the second day, the discussion on the resolutions was taken up. The resolution of greetings to the Red Army and the Soviet people after pointing out how Stalin-grad saved the world from Nazi domination and the present offensive is helping to create a new people's Europe, said:

"The bond of friendship between our people, the peoples of the Soviet and the great people of China is destined to shape the future of Asia and of the world. We look forward eagerly to the day of final victory of the Soviets which must shortly come with the impending opening of the Second Front in Europe. In the final victory, we see hopes of a new world rid of fascism and imperialism in every shape or form and that bright future when India in happy collaboration with her great neighbours the Soviet Union and China, will help to advance the cause of