

Oct. 29, 1948

High Honors for Moscow Art Theater

THE MOSCOW Art Theater jubilee, observed on Oct. 27, was marked in all the capitals of Union republics, as well as in many other Soviet cities, where celebration meetings dedicated to the great playhouse were held.

The main commemoration event, held in the premises of the Art Theater in Moscow, was attended by delegations from the various Union republics, visitors from abroad, representatives of the capital's public, members of the Government, generals of the Soviet Army and heads of the foreign embassies and missions in Moscow.

The occasion was also marked by the publication of an honors list awarding Orders or medals to 280 members of the Art Theater's company and service personnel. Among the recipients of the highest award, the Order of Lenin, are Mikhail Kedrov, art director of the theater, and actress Olga Knipper-Chekhova, the widow of Anton Chekhov, the great Russian writer, who has given 50 years of her life to the theater. She appeared in the first performance staged by the Art Theater and continues to act to the present.

A large number of Art Theater members were also awarded honorary titles. The title of People's Artist of the USSR was conferred on eight actors, the title of People's Artist of the RSFSR on 16, that of Honored Art Worker of the RSFSR on eight, and the title of Honored Artist of the RSFSR on 22.

In Moscow the commemorative ceremonies started in the morning of the anniversary day, when delegations of public organizations, institutions, factories, schools and art workers of the various Union republics, as well as the foreign visitors, began to arrive at the theater. The latter included Thomas Moyo, art director of the National Theater in Budapest, Dr. Otto Fritz Gayard, professor at the Theatrical Institute in Weimar, Raoul Aslan, art director of the Vienna Theater, Christu Sarafov, People's Artist of Bulgaria, Zacharia Stancu, director of theaters of Rumania, Hans Jacob Nielsen, director of the National Theater of Norway, Leon Schiller, art director of three theaters in Poland, and Jan Skoda, director of the Realistic Theater in Prague. Many foreign theater people who were unable to attend personally sent messages of greetings.

Among the latest congratulatory messages from abroad is one from a group of American cultural workers. The message reads: "On the 50th anniversary, that shining landmark of world culture, we salute you who carried on and enriched the great traditions of Stanislavsky. We greet you with warm friendship and a fervent desire to keep open the avenues of cultural communication as essential to the maintenance of friendly relations between our countries and of world peace." The message is signed, among others, by Edith Atwater, Robert Bell, Henrietta Buckmaster, Edward Chodorow, Olin Downes, Judy Holliday, Jilby Holman, Norris Houghton, Mary Hunter, Alfred Kreymbourg, Eva La Gallienne, John Martin, Jean Muir, Barbara Robbins, Paul Robeson, Lillian Hellman, Clifford Odets, Oscar Serlin and Mark Van Doren.

The main speaker at the celebration meeting held at the Art Theater in the evening of Oct. 27 was P. I. Lebedev, Chairman of the Arts Committee of the Council of Ministers of the USSR.

"Millions of Soviet people know and love the Moscow Art Theater," he said. "Whole generations of our theater people have been brought up on its artistic traditions. It has exercised a great effect on the multinational art of our country as a whole. Because of this the Art Theater jubilee has drawn the attention of the entire Soviet public and is a festival of Soviet culture in the full sense of the word."

The Art Theater company was greeted by Alexandra Yablochkina, one of the oldest Russian actresses, on behalf of the theater people of the Soviet Union. A. Fadeyev, General Secretary of the Union of Soviet Writers, spoke on behalf of the writers. Other speakers were S. Vavilov, President of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, and representatives of the Soviet youth, the Soviet armed forces and the workers of the capital.

The celebration meeting sent a message of greetings to J. V. Stalin.

Following the formal part of the evening, actors from the various Union republics attending the festivities gave fragments from their best productions.