

Siberians say USSR and U.S. benefit in pact

by A.J. McClanahan

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The exchange of medical information and research data between Siberia and Alaska will be a great benefit to both the United States and the Soviet Union, according to Dr. Yuri P. Nikitin, director of the Institute of Internal Medicine in Novosibirsk, Siberia.

Speaking in a press conference Thursday at the end of a 12-day visit to Alaska, Nikitin said that was the one point he wanted to stress in his talks with Americans. Speaking through an interpreter, Nikitin said U.S. journalists ask the Soviets what's in the deal for Americans. At the same time, Soviet journalists question the benefits for Siberia.

Nikitin said his trip to Alaska has impressed upon him that both nations will gain from an agreement signed in Anchorage during the Soviets' trip.

The agreement calls for a medical exchange between the University of Alaska and the Siberian Branch of the Soviet Academy of Medical Sciences.

Touring Anchorage, Kotzebue, Nome, Barrow, Fairbanks and Buckland were Nikitin, deputy chairman of the Presidium of the Siberian Branch of the Soviet Academy of Medical Sciences in Novosibirsk; Dr. Vladimir Davidenko, a cardiologist and physiologist who has done extensive work in Antarctica; and Dr. Evgeny N. Starkov, who has taught at the medical school in Novosibirsk.

"Everywhere we went, they were practically turning people away," Mala said of the trip. "The response everywhere was just magnificent."

Mala said in Buckland, the entire

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village turned out to meet the Soviets. Villagers shared a potluck dinner with them. In Nome, the Soviets were greeted with an "honor guard" of elders who lined up at the airport.

Kotzebue officials laid a red carpet, with skins from reindeer from the airport terminal to the aircraft, and Eskimo dancers performed along the route. And in Barrow, officials put on a dinner of Beef Wellington for 150 people, Mala said.

Mala said the turnout for events in Anchorage and Fairbanks was just as impressive.

Also, Mala said the Soviets were flown over Little Diomed Island, the closest point in the United States to the Soviet Union, and at one point the aircraft "just wandered" over to the Soviet side. In fact, the pilot allowed the Soviets on board to speak to their fellow countrymen.

What did they say?

Nikitin said they just said hello. He conceded that the Soviets who responded were surprised by voices speaking Russian.

At the press conference Thursday, Nikitin, Davidenko and Starkov were asked about their impressions of Alaska.

Nikitin said he had a good impression of the medical facilities in the state, but that he was particularly pleased with the people he met. Alaskans' response to the Soviets gave him great hope for mutual cooperation, he said.

Davidenko said he was astonished that a state as large as Alaska did not have an institute for the study of circumpolar medicine. Also, he said he found it curious that hospitals in places such as Kotzebue had as many as 40 beds but only a handful of patients. He said the Soviets make greater use of their facilities.

Davidenko said another difference he noticed was that there were few professionals in small Northern villages in Alaska. He explained that in Siberia, the Soviets place great



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North Pole become the Pole of Peace."

Earlier, Nikitin addressed a breakfast gathering of people who worked to make the visit possible and

on the logistics of various facets of the tour. He addressed those there as "dear friends," saying the Soviets now had the right to use that term for the Alaskans.

stress on training physicians, lawyers and teachers in each community.

Nikitin said the Soviets so far have discussed more than 100 proposals for cooperative research between Alaska and Siberia with Mala and other university officials. Some of the areas to be studied could include depression related to light and dark, nutrition and circadian rhythms. The key focus of the research is human adaptation to the North.

"All of us consider that this visit serves world peace and mutual understanding," Nikitin said. He discussed the Soviet desire for a nuclear-free Arctic, adding, "Let the