

# Sympathy scroll called Alaska's 'noble gesture'

by Alexey Bukalov

Moscow New Times political reporter

*Editor's Note: Alexey Bukalov was in Anchorage Feb. 20 to 28 as part of a visit of more than 90 Soviets. Their tour was sponsored by Dixie Belcher of Juneau and the Alaska State Chamber of Commerce.*

The visit of the Soviet delegation to Alaska ended too quickly.

It seems like just yesterday we were welcomed warmly at the Anchorage International Airport.

The local newspapers in Anchorage reported accurately what the

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# • Scroll contained message of hope

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After he heard about the earthquake, Clavier had put out a scroll for anyone to sign in the Anchorage 5th Avenue Mall which he manages.

"It was really an idea of, 'What can the average person do to help?'" Clavier said.

But his plan to get a few messages of sympathy and solace for the Armenian people soon grew into a scroll a quarter of a mile long which held messages from 46 American states and 17 different countries.

"It was a message of hope for Christmas," he said.

The scroll reached Mikhail Gorbachev, secretary general of the Central Communist Party, on Christmas Eve and was relayed to Armenia as a gesture of goodwill.

When the Soviet delegation arrived in Anchorage last week, Alexey Bukalov, a journalist from Moscow, said he had been asked by the Central Party to find Clavier and thank him for his work on the Sympathy Scroll — as it came to be called.

When the two men met, they had much to talk about.

Bukalov talked about how the Armenian people looked when he arrived the day after the earthquake — Dec. 8. He recalled people sitting in the rubble near open coffins, waiting for their relatives to be found.

The Armenians mourned for days. But he also told Clavier how when the scroll, and the letter which accompanied, were read to the people in Leninakan, it let them know they were not alone.

Clavier said many people who signed the Sympathy Scroll have called asking if anyone had received a reply. But before Bukalov had met with him, Clavier said he couldn't tell the callers much.

"Now, since he was in here, we have told people who were very close to the project what has happened," Clavier said.

Bukalov gave Clavier a commemorative Lenin medal, and told him that the scroll and the letter have been put on display in Armenia for the people to see.

"It was a very heart-warming experience," Clavier said.



*Soviet journalist Alexey Bukalov presents a medal to Robert Clavier.*

Photo by Steve Pilkington