

PUBLIC MEETING REPORT

R E S T R I C T E D

Foreign Nationalities Branch
Number M-192

Office of Strategic Services
26 May 1944

Event: DINNER CELEBRATING THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF BIROBJIDJAN

Sponsor: American Birobidjan Committee (AMBIJAN)

Speakers: ~~Elbert D. Thomas, Anna M. Kross, William Gailmor, Max Levin, Edward I. Aronow, Vladimir Bazykin, M. M. Gusev, E. D. Kisselev, George Gordon Battle, Sergei Kournakoff, Vilhjalmur Stefansson~~

Place: Hotel Waldorf-Astoria, New York

Date: 16 May 1944

Attendance: 1,000

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A dinner honoring the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Jewish Autonomous Region of the USSR (Birobidjan) was given by the AMBIJAN Committee at the Hotel Waldorf-Astoria on 16 May. All the speakers stressed the importance of Birobidjan in the post-war reconstruction and rehabilitation problems facing the Jews of the entire world. The Soviet Union was lauded for the part it had played in giving refuge to some 1,600,000 Jewish war refugees within its borders. Unofficial estimates place 100,000 of these in Birobidjan. A campaign for cooperation in the settlement of 3,500 orphan Jewish refugees, whose parents were the victims of the Nazi armies either on the battlefields of Eastern Europe or in flight into Soviet territory, was launched at the dinner.

Senator Elbert D. Thomas of Utah called for a permanent alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union as the "only guarantee of lasting peace -- of equal rights of the individual -- the only guarantee to the rights of nations."

He emphasized that the Soviet Government had a wise policy

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on nationalities and said that in the USSR anti-Semitism was as vigorously fought as treason itself.

Judge Anna M. Kross of the New York Municipal Court recalled her first connection with AMBIJAN despite her ardent Zionism. She asserted that Russia, once the fountainhead of anti-Semitism and the scene of the Kishinev Massacre, was now the only country where anti-Semitism was completely eliminated.

William Gailmor, radio news commentator, spoke of the plight of Hungary's Jews, now herded into thirty-four ghettos. Admiral Horthy, he charged, had thought to put the idea over through such people as Tibor Eckhardt and Otto of Austria but Hitler forced him to act directly. The Soviet Union was "a friendly, glorious, Allied Government," Gailmor declared; "there are no White Papers in the Soviet Union."

Max Levin, chairman of AMBIJAN, reviewed the history of Birobidjan. By constituting this territory of some 30,000 square miles on the Manchurian border of Siberia as a Jewish Autonomous Region, he pointed out, the Soviet Union had given the Jews representation in the Council of Nationalities, which was part of the highest legislative and executive authority in the USSR. When a sufficient number of Jews were permanently settled in the Region, he added, Birobidjan would become a Jewish Autonomous Republic.

The AMBIJAN secretary-treasurer, Edward I. Aronow, reported that \$200,000 in goods had been shipped last year

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and that the goal for this year would be \$1,000,000. This year's collection would be for the 1,000 war orphans in Stalingrad and the 3,500 in Birobidjan.

Other speakers included the Honorable Vladimir Bazykin, First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy; The Honorable E. D. Kisselev, Soviet Consul in New York; M. M. Guzev, chairman of Amtorg; and Captain Sergei Kournakoff, journalist and military writer. Vilhjalmur Stefansson, the noted explorer, who is vice-president of the AMBIJAN Committee, served as toastmaster. A cablegram of greetings from the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in Moscow was read at the meeting.