

## Register Editorial

# Come to Iowa, President Medvedev

**I**t was sort of an off-the-top comment, but great events sometimes spring from such spontaneity.

A visiting Russian senator speaking at Drake University earlier this week suggested building relationships not just between top leaders but across a broad range of U.S. and Russian government and business groups. Kenneth Quinn, a former U.S. ambassador and current president of the World Food Prize Foundation in Des Moines, seized the opportunity to say he would extend an invitation to Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to participate in the World Food Prize event in 2011. That will be a big event for the Food Prize, which will celebrate its 25th anniversary and completion of new headquarters in the former library on Des Moines' riverfront downtown.

The sort of diplomacy suggested by Mikhail Margelov at Drake is precisely the sort of international exchange of people and ideas the World Food Prize facilitates. Quinn said expanding relationships between Americans and Russians could

further the cause of ending global hunger: "This is a real opportunity for two big countries with a pretty rich history of stressing the importance of science to do things better," Quinn said Wednesday.

This is reminiscent of the famous 1959 Iowa visit by Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. At that time, Soviet crops were failing, and the Register's editorial page editor, the late Lauren Soth, lobbied an invitation to Khrushchev to come to see how it worked in the nation's Bread Basket. Khrushchev agreed; the Garst family's Coon Rapids farm and seed-corn operation became famous; Soth's editorial fetched a Pulitzer Prize; and the visit made history.

History could be repeated, and it should be, because U.S.-Russian relationships are still important to both countries and to the world.

Times have changed, of course. Russians today do not face mass starvation, and the Cold War has thawed. Still, relations between the two nations are frosty, if not icy, at times. And the two nations could achieve much to benefit

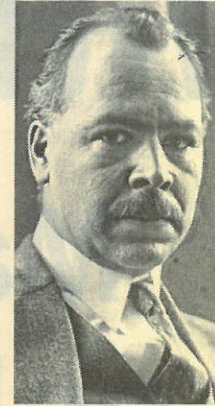
the world — in the Middle East in terms of cooling tensions, for example, or in Africa in terms of food production. There is need for a more open dialogue.

That could happen with the sort of friendships forged between Americans and Russians that grew out of the '59 Khrushchev visit. That single event opened the door to people-to-people diplomacy between America and the Soviet Union, which led to an appreciation among the people of both countries that they have common needs and aspirations.

The Khrushchev visit to Iowa a half-century ago also enhanced Iowans' understanding that this state is not just an important contributor to the domestic agricultural and manufacturing economy, but to the global economy.

That is still true, and it is more important than ever that Iowans see themselves as ambassadors to the world.

So, we second Ambassador Quinn's invitation: Come to Iowa, President Medvedev, and you'll see some of the best examples of life in rural and urban America.



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**Nikolai Vavilov**

## An Iowa angle

World Food Prize Foundation President Kenneth Quinn recently discovered an Iowa angle to the story of a celebrated Russian plant scientist, Nikolai Vavilov, who collected and preserved seed samples from around the world. Vavilov's global travels in the 1920s and '30s included Iowa, Minnesota, Mexico,

India and Pakistan. Thus, Vavilov followed a path strikingly similar to that of Nobel laureate Norman Borlaug, the Cresco, Ia., native who attended the University of Minnesota and did pioneering crop research in Mexico, India and Pakistan, among other lands. Vavilov died in a Russian prison in 1943, the year Borlaug was preparing to go to Mexico. Thus, Quinn said, he figuratively carried the torch lit by Vavilov.