

bring the debate about equal participation in meetings from the abstract to the concrete, and helps to educate all of us — in a non-confrontational way — about the inequality that still exists.

The Women's Caucus also expanded the definition of a "point of order" to include sexist and discriminatory behaviour. As well, members of the women's caucus have spoken privately to individuals who have acted in a sexist manner to explain why their words or actions have been unacceptable. The Women's Caucus of the CPA has been responsible for making some real steps forward in working to create an organization that involves women and gives them power. Now the Women's Caucus is moving into a second stage of assessing where it has come and making sure that these gains become a clear part of the CPA's history and policy.

A working group of the caucus met in November and agreed to draft a "Statement of the Women's Caucus." This document will examine our experiences as women working for peace, and put forward our common agenda for maintaining and increasing our involvement in the Canadian Peace Alliance decision-making process.

Since it began, the Women's Caucus has offered ways of increasing women's participation, dealing with problems, and has created a great support system for women — and that's not to mention the back and foot massages.

Please consider whether any group(s) with which you are involved might join the Canadian Peace Alliance. There is a sliding scale of membership fees according to the group's annual budget. Details can be obtained from: The Canadian Peace Alliance, Suite 5, 555 Bloor St. West, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1Y6.

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NO NUKES

Toronto/Volgograd: A Venture in Citizen Diplomacy

by Anne Hume

It is a November evening in 1984, and two of us are sitting with Valentina and her family and friends in her cosy apartment in Volgograd, in the Soviet Union. The table is elegantly set, crowded with the makings of a feast — caviar, tinned crab from Vladivostock, paté, cheese, salami, several kinds of bread, tomatoes, cucumbers, champagne, cognac and mineral water. There are apples from the dacha — the summer home across the Volga River which Valentina and her husband, Vitaly, and children share with Elizabeth and Victor. When Tony shows them pictures of his "dacha" on a Georgian Bay island, there are exclamations of amazement: "But where can you grow your fruit and vegetables?"

Two years of preparation have led us to this charmed evening. A small group of us in Toronto, concerned by increasing polarization between East and West, decided to try to combat stereotypes and promote understanding by developing exchanges with a Soviet city. We sought to create a people-to-people relationship touching on the issues we had in common as city-dwellers, including the risk of nuclear war.

Which city should we choose? A search of City Hall archives reminded us that Toronto had an historic wartime relationship with Volgograd (then known as Stalingrad) when thousands of people took part in a massive relief effort, collecting clothing, medical supplies and money for the survivors following the Battle of Stalingrad.

This battle took place in the autumn and winter of 1942-3, and the Soviet victory marked a turning point of the Second World War. The battle was horrific: 80,000 soldiers and 40,000 civilians died. The city was levelled, so devastated that when rebuilding was discussed, it was suggested that the site should be aban-

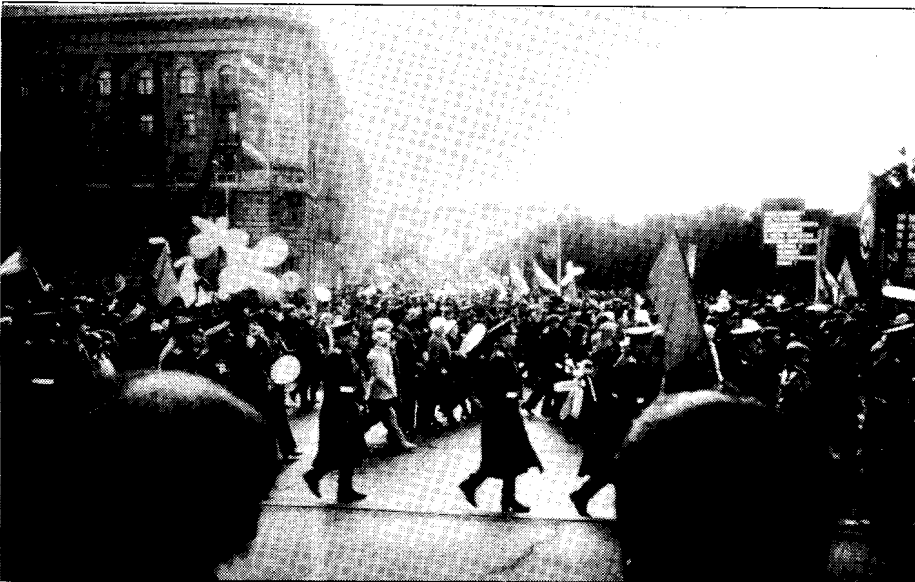
doned. But it was important to the people's sense of triumph over war to rebuild their city in its original setting.

Here was a city with a connection with Toronto, but also a city whose people understood better than most the horrors of war — a truly appropriate choice, we felt. After receiving endorsement of the idea at a public meeting, TORONTO/VOLGOGRAD was formally constituted in October 1983.

Our first two invited guests from Volgograd spent a week in Toronto in the spring of 1984. Alexandre Ovcharov is a retired general, the only survivor of a tank division of more than twenty in the battle. Lioudmila Kouznetsova is a Senior Officer with Volgograd's International Relations Department. (Since the War Volgograd has developed sister-city relationships with eleven cities, among them Coventry, Dijon, Hiroshima, Madras, and most recently, Cleveland). These two people became our first Volgograd



Volgograd War Memorial



Toronto mayor Art Eggleton and Toronto/Volgograd co-chair Anne Hume, discussing plans for an exchange visit (top); first Toronto delegation on arrival in Volgograd, November 1984, outside the hotel Postas (centre); and watching the parade celebrating the 67th anniversary of the Revolution (bottom).

friends and continue in strong support of extensive links between our cities.

One highlight of that first visit was a reception at City Hall which included as guests some of the people who had participated in the fund-raising drives for Stalingrad forty years before. We spent time in discussion with our visitors planning the next step, a Toronto visit to Volgograd ... Eight months later, with financial and moral support from a wide range of community groups, Tony and I were there, two of a group of thirteen.

Vitaly and Valentina drove us around the city, showing us some landmarks. There is a special, personal pride felt by everyone living here — not just that theirs has the special status of Hero City because of its war history. It's more than the vivid reminders, like the row of tank turrets set in concrete which mark the last line of defence, or Flour Mill Number 4, a bullet-pocked shell of a ruin left standing by the river. Or the immense war memorial complex Mamai Kurgan, built on the highest rise of land, where, because of its strategic significance, some of the fiercest fighting took place.

The pride comes from personal involvement in rebuilding Volgograd. On the way to their apartment, Vitaly, who works in administration, pointed out a number of buildings he had worked on. The tradition continues today: the macramé decorations in the new restaurant of the riverside pavilion were done by a group of Volgograd schoolchildren.

As of January 1988, there have been altogether three visits each way. Plans for 1988 include one or two runners from Toronto going to Volgograd to take part, with representatives from sister cities, in a run to commemorate the 45th anniversary of the victory of the Battle of Stalingrad. We have invited four Volgograd children to participate in a Children's International Summer Village near Orangeville. We await a decision on an invitation to Volgograd to send a group of eight to Toronto in October. Given the new interest in independence from central bureaucracies — and our last group to visit saw some exciting changes, elections of factory managers, the opening of a private café — we suggested that they send people interested in business.

What a far cry from February 1984 when, as guests at a Rotary breakfast in Toronto, Lioudmila and Alexander were

asked about the possibility of establishing a Volgograd branch of Rotary. "But we have no businessmen!" responded a bemused Lioudmila. Today such an idea seems much less laughable...

Five years later, is TORONTO/VOLGOGRAD achieving its goals? It's easier to assess what we have not achieved, namely that we have yet to persuade Mayor Eggleton to sign an agreement with Mayor Starovatykh that would make Toronto and Volgograd sister cities. And we have our critics and detractors. We're told we are dupes being manipulated by Soviet propagandists, that it's useless trying to have an impact on people who can have no influence with their government, or we're criticised for dealing with a country with such a deplorable record on human rights.

Our answer is that we can only try, that it's better to be involved than to avoid contact. Paranoia and fear thrive in the dark of ignorance. Only with interaction can you learn, develop friendships, build trust — the necessary ingredients for détente. We don't believe our critics have any positive solutions to the problem of East-West tensions.

So we continue. We have shared our experiences with thousands of people in the Toronto region. We encourage other groups to forge their own links with Volgograd, such as the Toronto branch of Veterans Against Nuclear Arms which has twinned with Volgograd's veterans' association. Our mailing list is growing, and there is lots more to do.

Most importantly, in a city which is a powerful symbol of the triumph of the human will, we have begun to form some lasting friendships. We have discovered their eagerness to learn about us, the concern they feel about the way the Soviet people are viewed in the West, and their dread of war. We quickly learned that the similarities between us far outweigh the differences. They are as eager as we are to continue the exchanges. The networks are developing. Or as our journalist friend, Sasha, said, in writing about us for *Moscow News*: "Toronto/Volgograd — the bridge is open to traffic."

Anne Hume is co-chair, with Jim Houston, of Toronto/Volgograd. For further information, contact Anne at 37 Castle Frank Rd., Toronto, Ont. M4W 2Z5, (416) 923-7105.



First Toronto group visiting war-shattered Flour Mill #4 (top); second Toronto delegation to Volgograd, April 1986, greeted by schoolchildren with flowers (centre); second Volgograd delegation to Toronto, May 1985: Larissa Mitina (left) with Anne Hume and John Sewell at St. Lawrence Market (bottom).