

# Women in the Canadian Peace Alliance

by Joanne Dufay and Sheena Lambert

## Background to the Alliance

The Canadian Peace Alliance (CPA) is a relatively young organization. Since its founding in November 1985, it has grown to include more than 400 peace-related groups across the country, including the major urban peace coalitions, many smaller rural and community peace groups, as well as women's groups, youth groups, and broad representation from labour, including the Canadian Labour Congress.

The mandate of the Alliance is to help the diverse voices of the Canadian Peace Movement work together. The groups in the CPA are represented through a 35-person Steering Committee that meet two to three times a year. The Steering Committee is made up of 25 regional organizations from all parts of Canada and 15 national peace groups.

The most recent action of many member groups within the CPA has been the launching of the Canadian Peace Pledge Campaign. The goal of the campaign is to build the support of voters across the country for a nuclear weapons free Canada — and then convince politicians that they must listen and respond to this call for peace. The campaign will include "voter pledges" collected in federal ridings across Canada; demonstrations and pickets; all candidates meetings; publicity (including national advertising); and ongoing national and local political lobbying.

## The CPA Women's Caucus

The CPA is often considered a model by other organizations because of some of its creative ways of ensuring gender balance — such as male and female co-chairs at all Steering Committee meetings, and making sure decision-making commit-

tees have an equal number of men and women on them. These innovations, and others, have been brought forward over the years by women active in the peace movement, and have been adopted and adapted by women in the CPA. The idea for women's caucuses within the peace movement grew out of the experiences women had of not participating equally in the decision-making process of the movement.

Within the Steering Committee of the CPA, women discussed this problem and saw these reasons for the problem. Many of us lacked familiarity with formal or large meeting procedures. We had been socialized into "female" behaviours (sitting quietly, and otherwise being submissive and non-assertive). We were confronting sexist behaviour from other participants. And lastly, working within what many women viewed as the "male-type" decision-making, problem-solving process can, in itself, inhibit the participation of women.

The women's caucus recommended that creative approaches be taken to increase women's participation in CPA meetings. We introduced requests from the chair to hear from more female speakers in a debate with many male voices. We also attempted to encourage in the meetings a special effort of gentleness towards all those who found the system difficult. The women's caucus expected adequate childcare and similar arrangements to be provided at all CPA meetings.

The women's caucus also introduced the idea of timing one session of the Steering Committee meeting, to record how long and how often men speak as compared to women. At the last Steering committee meeting in Montreal the official record shows that women spoke only 31% of the total session, while men spoke for 68% of the time. This method helps to

The following is excerpted from the *CPA Structure Document*:

The Canadian Peace Alliance (CPA) seeks to involve Canadians in the worldwide movement to stop the arms race, ensure the non-violent settlement of disputes and guarantee the security and well-being of all peoples. We want to make Canada a peacemaker in the world community of nations by taking concrete initiatives to withdraw from the arms race and to encourage reciprocal initiatives by other nations.

The objective of the CPA is to build Canadian public and government support for the following goals:

1. The involvement and participation of the Canadian public in the worldwide movement towards disarmament and a truly secure and economically just world for all people.
2. A negotiated and verifiable freeze and reversal of the arms race, ending the vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear and other weapons on earth and in space.
3. The establishment of Canada as a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ), thereby ending all funding research, transport, testing, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons systems and their components in Canada and also ending the export of nuclear technology and radioactive fuels that may be used for the production of nuclear weapons.
4. The redirection of funds from wasteful military spending to the funding of human needs through a program of conversion and re-training, promoting the development of a peace oriented economy.
5. The creation and strengthening of world institutions and mechanisms for the prevention of aggression, the peaceful resolution of international conflict, and the promotion of friendship among peoples.
6. The dissolution of all military blocs.
7. The assertion of an independent Canadian foreign policy for peace.

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