



PEACE CHILD / TORONTO

Chapter Newsletter

175 St. Clair Ave. West, Toronto M4V 1P7

November 1990

NOTES FROM ILENE: EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME

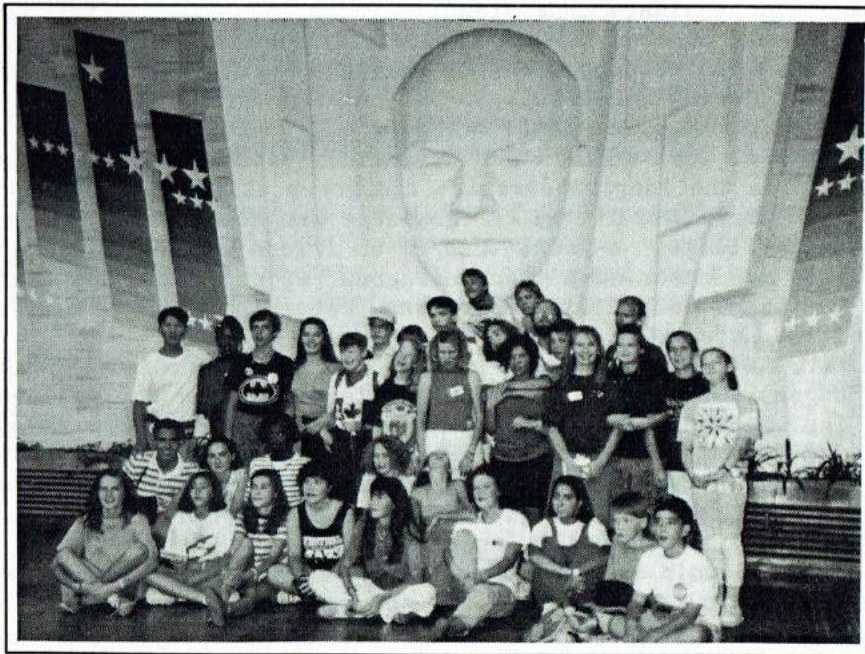
What an adventure we had! On our first night in the Soviet Union, we felt rather as Alice in Wonderland must have felt falling through the rabbit hole. We ended up staying the night at "Domodedovskaya" airport terminal as our evening flight to Volgograd had been unexpectedly cancelled.

By the time we reached Volgograd on August 9th, a full thirty-six hours after our departure from Toronto, I felt "sublime." Tired, but excited and fully conscious that we were at long, long last, truly in the Soviet Union. I'll never forget how wonderful the caviar on bread and small cups of strong, thick coffee tasted that morning at the terminal canteen.

The reunion of the Toronto-Volgograd Peace Child cast outside the Volgograd Pioneer Palace was emotional and noisy: much shrieking and hugging and tears. (New members of the cast confessed later they felt like going home! Everyone seemed to have such strong friendships and they wondered if they would ever really be a part of this troupe.)

That very evening (after a five-hour "rest" with host families) we had a Volga River cruise, hosted by our film crew friends from last year, Sasha Shekhovtsov and Peter Tarashenko of the Volgograd Leisure Centre. (The Leisure Centre was our main sponsor in Volgograd and arranged for many of our special outings, the Gala Reception after the first performances, and hot water at the Hotel!)

Of the four weeks in Volgograd, we stayed three at the Oktyabrskaya Hotel, a pleasant hotel a short walk from the Pioneer Palace and the city centre. The other week was spent with host families, so we had a little taste of what it is really like to live in Volgograd. Everyone was most hospitably kind to us and determined that we should always be well cared for. We knew about food shortages from the newspapers, but our hosts made sure we never had to face that reality directly. Volgograd is the tomato capital of the Soviet Union, so August is a great time to visit. We ate lots of fresh apples, plums, tomatoes and cucumbers.



August 9th was the happiest day of my life: at last I could see and hug the people I had been waiting for the whole year!...You guys have taken home a great part of my heart, remember that. -- Dima Yurasov



Peace Child gave me everything I need in my life: MUSIC, STAGE and LOVE. The experience we had on both continents was fantastic. And these are not just words, I assure you. You gave something that I didn't have before: it's the feeling of some global love and understanding. Now I know what can save our planet -- it is Truth and Love.
 -- Liuda Shmeliova

Group picnic after Pioneer Camp, August 12th.

I don't think I'll ever be able to forget any part of last summer. I've never felt so close to so many people. It was incredible to see everyone just let go of all their inhibitions and just let loose! When looking back and reflecting on my time in Russia, I'll always think first to the amazing generosity that we experienced and most of all to the loving relationships that I shared -- with one person in particular! I'm looking forward to seeing everyone soon. -- Francis Li

Every moment we spent in the Soviet Union brought us closer together, and I have never felt so loving or so loved in my life. The entire experience will live in my heart forever. Peace Child is my family. Let us all continue to work towards peace on earth, for it was our common values and our hope for humankind that brought us together. I love you.
 -- Danielle Martin



Peace Children perform in Volgograd.

Much of the time from August 9th to September 1st was spent in long, hot rehearsals at the Pioneer Palace. The show that evolved was very different from the show last year in Toronto. The Russian word for a musical of this kind is "spektah'kle" and the Volgograd show was more of a spectacle, with choreographed dance numbers, solo singers, and assorted costumes. The plot revolved around Lena Yakoleva, a young girl concerned about the environment. The voice of the "spirit of the earth" speaks to her and helps her to find other like-minded



Ilene Cummings presents Sasha Shekhovtsov with a gift for the Leisure Centre; Soviet co-director Michael Karasikov looks on.

children. They approach the powerful people at the top ("bureaucratskis"), are sent to a brainwashing school, etc. Finally, they create their own world which the adults can only enter when they change their way of looking at things.

It was fascinating to watch the show in company with the Russian audience, who enjoyed it very much. They laughed heartily at the bureaucrats and some Soviet jokes that I didn't always understand.

Yes, the show was almost entirely in Russian! I was very proud of how well our group was able to cope with the language. They also overcame whatever frustrations they felt during rehearsals to put on a wonderful show with their Volgograd friends. By the end, the true spirit of Peace Child shone through the whole experience. And yes, the new cast members had definitely become a part of the troupe.

Despite the long rehearsals, the group still had time for many interesting outings, including a trip to the large War Memorial at Mamayev Hill, a day at the "Cossack Village," a yacht trip to an island in the Volga for a mammoth picnic, and a visit to a Pioneer Camp. In Leningrad, we enjoyed a bus tour of this beautiful city, and had brief trips to Petrodvorets (Peter the Great's Summer Palace) and the famed Hermitage Museum.

What do I remember most? Aside from the incredible hospitality of the people and of course, our show, I remember little vignettes: the children from the audience waiting excitedly in the lobby, clutching their flowers and programs; the people walking from place to place through the network of parks (Volgograd really is a city of pedestrians in summer); Ken Fletcher and Keith McNair being made "honorary Cossacks" at the Cossack Village; Auld Lang Syne, sung in Russian to a haunting, sad new tune written by folk singer friends.

At the picnic on the Volga Island, we sat on tarpaulins spread under the trees for a wonderful feast. As I ate sturgeon soup from a metal bowl with a painted Russian spoon, I looked around at our Canadian-Soviet group sitting so companionably together and I thought, "What an experience! It really is worth all the work and struggle it took to get us here."

"DEETIA MIRA" A GREAT SUCCESS

There was standing room only at Volgograd's Pioneer Palace September 1-5, for five performances of a brand new production of "Deetia Mira" or Peace Child, featuring 17 students from Metro Toronto and 19 students from Volgograd.

"The Volgograd audiences were just as enthusiastic as the Toronto audiences had been last summer," Ilene Cummings reports. "Children brought flowers and sought autographs after every show."

The Toronto troupe arrived in the Soviet Union on August 8th. They spent a month in Volgograd, staying with their Soviet counterparts at the "Oktyabrskaya" Hotel for three weeks during the period of rehearsals. (This was the first time that the hotel had been used by an unofficial group. It is usually reserved for Communist Party officials.) The fourth week was spent living with host families, mainly the families of Volgograd cast members.

On September 6th, the troupe flew to Leningrad for a few days of sightseeing and one final performance at the large, central Pioneer Palace there. The Toronto troupe returned home on September 11th.

The students were accompanied by director Keith McNair, who co-directed the production with Volgograd director Michael Karasikov; Ilene Cummings, project co-ordinator; and Patricia Scroggie, chaperone. Holly Beamish of Ottawa's Peace Train Foundation acted as interpreter. Film makers Philip Desjardins and Ben Sharp, who are making a one-hour television documentary about the project, accompanied the group until September 4th. Lisa and Ryder McNair, wife and 8 year-old son of Keith, were also there for the first several weeks, as Lisa was organizing links between schools in Volgograd and Toronto. Ken

Fletcher, a war veteran from Toronto and friend of the group, was also in Volgograd and introduced us to some Soviet veterans.

This year's show focussed on concerns about the environment and modern living shared by Toronto and Volgograd students alike. In the USSR, as in Canada last summer, Peace Child received much press coverage, as well as national and local television attention. This two-year city-to-city exchange enlarged horizons on both sides of the world for cast members, their families and friends, and the Soviet and Canadian audiences.

COMMENTS FROM KEITH MCNAIR

Our adventure in Russia was one of the best I've experienced. The friendships that my family and I forged there continue to make us roll our eyes in wonder.

It was fascinating to experience a taste of Soviet life and to share, just briefly, in its joys and struggles. We were treated to a variety of experiences there that we would be hard-pressed to provide here.

And to think that in the midst of the wonderful tours and banquets; all the compote, champagne, caviar and blini; strings quartets, jam sessions and yachting; airport adventures, taxis, willful telephones and private stashes of toilet paper -- in the midst of all this and more, we made a play.

And it was there that I recognized what these Peace Kids, your children, mean to me. They're not just incredibly talented, committed, sensitive people. They're real friends. Thanks, "Kids," I couldn't have survived without you.

Though the time we spend together passed away so quickly, I remember every day. And I will keep it in my mind for the rest of my life. -- Natasha Lavrova

EVENTS

PEACE CHILD RETREAT

November 10th has been set aside for a half-day "retreat" workshop for members of Peace Child/Toronto, our troupe, steering committee and others to think about the future for our organization and ourselves. Steering committee members Stephanie Merrin and Sue Goldberg will guide us through a series of activities designed to empower us individually and collectively. We hope to have a basic statement encompassing short- and long-term goals for Peace Child/Toronto at the end of the afternoon. Anyone interested in the future of Peace Child/Toronto is welcome to attend. The meeting will take place from noon-5 pm at St. Christopher House, 761 Queen St. West. A light lunch will be served. Call Ilene Cummings at 651-2955 to enroll.

PEACE CHILD REPORTS

On November 30th, members of the Peace Child troupe and accompanying adults will give reports about their Volgograd adventure, show slides and share songs from the play. We will also show a few video clips from Volgograd performances. Light refreshments will follow the presentation, which will take place at 7:30 pm at First Unitarian Congregation, 175 St. Clair Avenue West. \$2 public admission fee to cover refreshments; immediate family of Peace Child troupe members, free.

SHOW VIDEO READY

On October 21st, members of the Toronto Peace Child troupe and their families gathered to see the video of the Volgograd show. Film maker Phil Desjardins spent many hours editing it and it was much enjoyed by all. Copies of the tape will soon be available at cost to cast members (\$12 for the first tape, \$20 for additional copies.) Phil Desjardins is now working on a one-hour Peace Child television documentary.

CELEBRATION

Plans are afoot for a gala Peace Child evening in early January 1991 at Toronto City Hall. We hope to obtain use of the Council chambers for an evening of celebration for Peace Child, plus the premier showing of Phil Desjardin's documentary film on our summer adventures. We hope that our Volgograd friends Peter Tarashenko and Sasha Shekhovtsov (and family -- including Anya from our cast!) will be in Toronto at that time. We expect to have a confirmed date by mid-December, so call Ilene Cummings at 651-2955 in mid-December if you haven't heard by then. Admission free.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Ilene Cummings will attend the first International Peace Child Conference in Amsterdam November 17-20th. Representatives from several countries, including USSR, USA, Japan, Holland, and France, will be meeting with the founders of the Peace Child movement: David Woollcombe, David Gordon, Bernard Benson, Rosie Symonds, and the Harbottles. Plans for the future of the Peace Child movement will be discussed. An archive of scripts, audio and video tapes is being set up and Ilene will take video tapes from both productions of the Toronto/Volgograd Peace Child exchange.

BENEFIT SHOW

Our friends at Toronto/Volgograd are holding a fundraising theatre night on November 26th. Here's an opportunity to see the hilarious, one-person show *Wingfield's Folly*, featuring Rod Beattie. (This is the third play in the renowned Wingfield trilogy by Dan Needles.) The show is on at 8 pm at Oakwood Collegiate (St. Clair Avenue West at Oakwood.) Tickets are \$18. Call 923-7105 for tickets and information.

NEWS

PC CONFERENCE

Ilene Cummings, Rebeka Houston and David Hersh attended a US Peace Child Conference recently. Rebeka reports:

During Thanksgiving weekend, David Hersh and I had the privilege of attending the Peace Child National Conference in San Raphael, California. The hundred or so Peace Children from all over the USA had a wonderful time working in the beautiful setting offered by the mountains and pine forests just north of San Francisco.

The conference started Friday evening with a warm welcome from US Peace Child's new general director. Saturday and Sunday's workshops included such subjects as "peace camps," "chapter membership," "personal environmental commitment," and "city at peace." On Saturday (before the ice cream party and dance!) the Youth Forum met. It was a meeting of kids only, during which we shared the pros and cons of our trips and decided on a few suggestions to be made to the board of directors. We heard a fascinating talk on conflict resolution on Sunday.

Two important issues raised during the conference were:

- (1) the possibility of Peace Child sending a letter to George Bush demanding that he commit to the U.N. declaration on the rights of the child, which he had refused to sign only the previous weekend; and
- (2) a lot of talk about the role of Peace Child alumni. Unfortunately, the most common role for alumni is to help out in the Peace Child office, or to meet and greet arriving tours -- and here in Toronto that's not exactly feasible. Of course, there are many ways that we as a Peace Child family can continue to exist, and they will all be discussed at our half-day retreat on November 10th.

I'll be glad to share more at the retreat -- just ask. Thank you for the opportunity to attend this conference and do what Peace Children do best: fall in love with whole groups of people in no time at all!

David Hersh, another Toronto delegate now attending university in Montreal, adds: After the conference in San Francisco I made some contacts with some people who are interested in starting a Montreal Peace Child. We have our first meeting in January '91 and have set a summer of '92 date for our first Peace Child production.

AUDITIONS

Although Peace Child/Toronto is not sponsoring an international exchange this year, it is still possible for young people of Toronto to audition for international Peace Child theatrical tours emanating from the USA. Ten students from Toronto have participated in US Peace Child exchanges in the past. 1991 exchanges are tentatively planned for USA, USSR, Europe, Israel, the Far East and Central America.

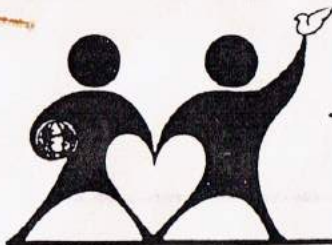
Casting is by audition and written essay. If a large enough group of auditionees sign up, the casting director will come to Toronto. Participants are expected to fundraise their own tuition: \$1500 for US programs, \$2500 for Europe and Central America, and \$3000 for the USSR (US funds.) A non-refundable \$20 audition fee is also required. Peace Child/Toronto will assist participants to raise their fees. Anyone interested in auditioning should contact Ilene Cummings immediately at 651-2955.

PEACE KIDS WORK

Toronto Peace Child cast member Thomas Barker, age 12, has been selected as one of the hosts for the new *Green Earth Club* show on TV Ontario.

Peace Child musician (and actor) Morgan Phillips is currently touring with the AIDS awareness show *What's Missing From This Picture?* Since our return, he has also been busy as an actor in an AIDS awareness film.

Congratulations, Thomas and Morgan!



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Chapter Newsletter

VOL. 1, NO. 3

JUNE, 1990

NOTES FROM ILENE

It seems a lifetime ago since I very innocently suggested to Michael Karasikov back in the summer of 1988 that we try to arrange a city-to-city Peace Child exchange between Toronto and Volgograd. I must admit I did not envision myself selling T-shirts, collecting visa applications, making speeches at City Hall, writing and writing more and more letters and newsletters and sending out information packets and attending countless meetings and collecting auctionable items....What did I envision? The show, of course, and the excitement of the joint production. That was what my mind focussed on, skidding happily over all the imaginable (and unimaginable) obstacles between that first conversation and the grand final event.

This vision of the show is still what keeps me going. We have had one such grand event already here in Toronto. That sweltering opening night with the wonderful energy of the cast, the flying balloons, the happy audience response is something I will always remember with great pleasure. Now as I work through these nerve-wracking days, the gathering of the visa applications, the scrabbling for money, the waking up in the middle of the night with little details dancing in my head--I make myself look forward to September 1st at the Pioneer Palace in Volgograd when the magic that is Peace Child will again be created in a different setting and language, but I hope with the same excitement and pleasure as happened here. I am also sustained by the strength and determination of members of our Toronto troupe and other supporters infected by the Peace Child spirit. The sound of the taped voices of our Peace Child friends in Volgograd also helps. Working together we can, we *will* make it happen.

--Ilene Cummings



Sarah Kanter at the fundraising dinner.

Here is a quote from Liuda Shmelova on the latest Volgograd tape:

My Dear Canadians.

I listened to your tape many times because I wanted to hear your voices again and again. That's very good that you're learning Russian and when you come to Volgograd we shall speak both Russian and English. Some days ago on my birthday, we saw a videotape which Sasha had made in Toronto. This tape showed our meeting, life in Scarborough Mission and our performance. And when I saw this I thought about how it was "back in 1989." And I was so happy to see your faces again even though on a screen. I know that we shall meet soon and I will see your true faces...Please don't forget that you are all my best friends. I remember you all the time "through the day and through the night."**

Bye, everybody. LIUDA.

* lines from the 1989 Toronto version of Peace Child.

(This message is followed by several lines of quickly-spoken Russian which the editor refuses to attempt to translate.)

*Be forgive me if you
get this already
Looking forward to
10 Aug Love Liuda*

FUNDRAISING

Successful Dinner

It was a beautiful dinner: the tables were artistically laid, the food was outstanding, the auction and program most entertaining.

Nearly 100 "friends of Peace Child" gathered at the First Unitarian Congregation on April 27th to celebrate the Toronto-Volgograd Peace Child project and to raise money for this summer's adventure. Approximately \$3,000 was raised between the dinner and the auction. Jim Houston hosted the event, Sherwood Hume was auctioneer. Performing in the program were the Peace Child Troupe, Whole Loaf Theatre and "Kitsch & Sync."

Some interesting auction items: a week at a two-bedroom house in Keswick, England, summer 1991; a big, beautiful teddy bear; two tickets to "Buddy" at the Royal Alex Theatre.

Raffle Winners

Thomas Barker, age 11, of the Peace Child cast leapt for joy when the first prize winner of the Peace Child raffle was announced at the dinner on April 27th. It was none other than T. Barker of the Whole Loaf Theatre--himself! Thomas had persuaded his parents to purchase raffle tickets with the money they had made performing as a group at the St. Lawrence Market, rather than just contributing the money to his fundraising total. His strategy paid off--the trip to Cuba was won by ticket #3190, one of their purchases.

1st Prize (Trip for two to Cuba):

#3190, T. Barker of Toronto.

2nd Prize (Mountain bicycle):

#1749, L. Gregson of Richmond Hill.

3rd prize (Dinner at "The Samovar":

#3435, G. O'Connell of Toronto.

Peace Child/Toronto wishes to express appreciation to Drum Travel, Magna Holidays; The Sport Swap; and "The Samovar" Restaurant for their assistance in offering these prizes.

Peace Train Support

The Peace Train Foundation in Ottawa is supporting the exchange by supplying the Peace Child troupe with a Russian translator and undertaking her costs. She is Holly Beamish, who translated for the group in Ottawa last summer and who is familiar to many of us. Holly is currently in Czechoslovakia teaching English; she will join us in Moscow on August 8th. Peace Child/Toronto wishes to thank Peace Train for this welcome assistance.

Toronto City Council Grant

Peace Child/Toronto is most grateful to the Toronto City Council for their May 29th approval of a \$10,000 grant in support of the Toronto-Volgograd Peace Child Exchange. This eases concern for the finances of the project and allows fundraising efforts to now focus on ensuring that the \$1400 needed for each of the fifteen cast members and two musicians will be raised. The grant approval was by no means certain--it was approved by a one-vote margin--and we are most grateful to all the council members who supported the project, especially Councillors Layton and Walker.



*1st Prize
Raffle Winner
Thomas Barker
of Toronto.*

*Photos by
Neil Haller.*

Earth Day Performance

Earth Day weekend (April 21-22) was an especially busy time for members of the Toronto Peace Child cast. On Saturday, they performed songs from the show at the Earth Fair at the First Unitarian Congregation. On Earth Day, all those "big name" rock groups performing at Nathan Phillips Square were preceded onstage by none other than our Peace Child troupe. They again sang songs and told a bit about the Toronto-Volgograd exchange.

Welcome from Queen Victoria

Six members of the Toronto Peace Child troupe visited Queen Victoria Elementary School on May 18th to present songs and scenes from Peace Child, as well as to answer questions (and sign autographs!) Amaya Ortigosa, Rebeka Houston, Sarah and Ben Kanter, Amy Johnson and Flickerine Stevens were accompanied by musicians Morgan Phillips and Matthew Mint on the occasion. The group presented two programs to assemblies of approximately 200 children each. Patricia Scroggie sold T-shirts to the teachers. Ilene Cummings talked to the teachers about Peace Child over lunch hour.

The children in the assemblies seemed to enjoy the program. They had just participated in an all-school project on "The Global Village" and Peace Child seemed an ideal follow-up. This school is attended by children from many different cultures and backgrounds. Cast members were surprised when one youngster asked in Russian, "What is your name?" Amaya promptly replied, "Menya zavoot Amaya."

Queen Victoria School contributed \$100 towards the cast's airfares. Groups of three from the cast intend to make smaller presentations to other schools, using the video from Vision TV. They already have dates arranged for Carleton Village School and Regal Road School.

Visitors from Volgograd

Eight tourists from Volgograd have been visiting Toronto from May 27th to June 8th. They are staying with Toronto host families and seeing the sights of the city and visiting other areas of interest. Several know Michael Karasikov and all are familiar with the Peace Child exchange plans. They brought taped messages from Peace Child friends with Russian verses recorded for some of the songs.

In April, Peace Child/Toronto finally received the "Christmas Greetings from Volgograd" tape which had been stuck in Volgograd for four months. Michael at last was able to mail it during his stay in California. In response, the Toronto group (with quick Russian coaching from Julia Schtivelman) sent back messages in English and Russian. The exchange of voices was much appreciated by both groups.

Peace Child Buttons

Michael Karasikov from Volgograd requested buttons of our own Toronto-Volgograd Peace Child logo. This seemed like a good idea and we have now put together some buttons both for our Volgogradian friends and to sell here in Toronto. The Toronto Board of Education has contributed 200 blank buttons and the use of their button-making device. Buttons are available from cast members for \$1 each.

Tax Creditable Donations

Remember, the Toronto-Volgograd Peace Child Exchange has been adopted by the World Federalist Foundation as a special educational project. Tax creditable donations can be made to the World Federalist Foundation -- Peace Child project. Donations (and other communications) may be sent to:

Peace Child/Toronto
175 St. Clair Avenue West
Toronto, Ontario M4V 1P7

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

USSR Conference

In April, over 200 Soviet students met in Moscow for the first USSR Peace Child Conference. Participants came from many major and minor cities. Members of our troupe from Volgograd performed a shortened version of our Peace Child, which was highly praised by Steve Riffkin (a Peace Child organizer from the USA, now living in Moscow.) There was also a moving presentation by the students from Gomel about the young victims of Chernobyl radiation. Videotapes of last summer's shows were screened.

Julia Klimova, director and producer of the first Russian Peace Child, said: "This was really the first time I felt the Peace Child spirit--I saw it in the eyes of the children. We have given them a sense that they can do something--that Peace Child is a vehicle over which they have some control. It's a very important moment now: we must do everything possible to allow them to realise their dream, for if we stop, or go back to organizing everything from the top in Moscow, we shall betray the great hopes that they all have for Peace Child."

Soviet Peace Child director Sasha Stokolov noted that a production in Vilnius, Lithuania, was definitely planned, but an Azerbjani/Armenian show was out of the question now. "There is a war there. Teachers and parents prevent their children from meeting each other under any conditions."

David Woollcombe found it touching that many kids mentioned Peace Child itself as part of the solution to the world problems in their outline script ideas. "The world hits a big crisis but, after a million Peace Child productions, all is well..." or "Peace Child kids escape into a forest to learn primeval life styles. They return to teach the world to live at peace with nature and the planet prospers..." Soviet kids' imaginations were running wild with the potential of the Peace Child process, ideas tumbling out in rich profusion!

Plus...

Peace children from Australia, Denmark, Korea, the Phillipines, USA and USSR will join a cast from Japan for a Peace Child production in Hiroshima this August.

London, England performance planned for the Shaw Theatre August 3rd and 4th with youth from more than 20 nations, including the first South African peace children!

Brussels (Belgium) City at Peace program brings together Arab immigrant children with Europeans.

Currently under discussion is an International Peace Child Conference in Moscow, proposed for April 1991!

(International news items adapted from David Woollcombe's Peace Child International News Update dated March/April 1990.)

Auction Donors

Peace Child/Toronto is very grateful to all those who donated their time, services and items to our auction. In addition to the many, many individual donors, we wish to say a special thanks to the following businesses:

Gino Empry
Factory Theatre
Key Porter Books
Kids at Play
McClelland and Stewart
David Mirvish
Roscher Gallery
Sherwood Hume Auctions
Troyka
Ukrainska Knyha
United Ukrainian Canadians

Tour Plans Change

Michael Karasikov in Volgograd has been diligently making arrangements for the Toronto group's visit. Some recent plan changes will take the group to Leningrad for the final few days rather than Moscow. Arrangements are still in flux and the Torontonians are prepared for anything!