

Dallaire visits Pugwash

Retired general sees proposed centre as catalyst to rejuvenate movement against nuclear weapons

By TOM McCOAG Amherst Bureau

PUGWASH — Senator Romeo Dallaire didn't sleep well Friday night because he was haunted by ghosts.

But they were not the evil ghosts that have troubled him since he witnessed the genocide of hundreds of thousands of people during his ill-fated United Nations mission in Rwanda a dozen years ago. No, they were the ghosts of the scientists, intellectuals, academics and businessmen who stayed at Cyrus Eaton's home nearly 50 years ago and launched the fight against nuclear proliferation.

"The ghosts in this house are not evil, but are ghosts of incredible serenity . . . who came together here in this serene environment to discuss how . . . to prevent humanity from wiping itself out," the retired general said Saturday in an interview conducted in the living room of the late Mr. Eaton's home.

"It's a question that must still be discussed, an issue that must still be brought to the attention of the world."

Senator Dallaire was in Pugwash to attend a dinner the Pugwash Peace Exchange Society staged to recognize his achievements as a soldier and statesman and to thank him for agreeing to become the society's honorary patron.



Giovanni Brenciaglia, a director of the Pugwash Peace Exchange, shows Senator Romeo Dallaire a wall that contains the portraits of several Canadian prime ministers. The pair were inside the Pugwash home of industrialist Cyrus Eaton. (TOM McCOAG / Amherst)

The society was formed this year. Its goal is to develop a \$6-million interpretive, educational and recreational complex that would preserve the history of the Pugwash Peace Conferences on Science and World Affairs and give politicians, scientists, educators and young people from around the world a place to promote peace.

The Pugwash Conferences began in 1957 with Mr. Eaton's help. The initial meeting attracted scientists and politicians from around the world, from both sides of the Iron Curtain. Albert Einstein and Bertrand Russell wrote a peace manifesto that called for the elimination of nuclear weapons. It was adopted at the meeting.

Senator Dallaire agreed to become the new society's honorary patron because he sees the centre's creation as a catalyst to help rejuvenate the worldwide movement against nuclear weapons.

"We thought the whole nuclear exercise would disappear because the main belligerents in the Cold War are now at peace with each other, but this hasn't happened. Instead, we see a whole

bunch of other actors potentially making proliferation, and the strong possibility of those weapons being used, a new reality."

Those actors include Iran, North Korea and extremist groups. The size of the weapons has decreased dramatically since the Cold War ended because of improved technology and because the controls on them are not as strong as before, the senator said.

The fact that the Pugwash movement is relaunching its anti-nuclear proliferation movement through the exchange society is a positive step, he said, "because it means we can bring the anti-nuclear perspective back into the mainstream just as it was in the 1950s and '60s."

"Pugwash was one of those tools that was significant and successful in bringing the proliferation of nuclear weapons under control," he said. "I think Pugwash can be just as significant today by once again pressuring world leaders back to not only suppress the proliferation of nuclear weapons but to bring about their ultimate elimination."

Focusing attention on nuclear arms would also force society to pay attention to the rapid increase in the number of small arms and the use of child soldiers — issues dear to the former general's heart.

"There are over 740 million small arms in the world . . . so small arms are weapons of mass destruction. Link these weapons with children — those aged nine to 14 — which exist in vast quantities in developing countries and who are deemed expendable, and that makes them weapons of mass destruction.

"Anyone who doesn't believe that just has to look at what is now happening in Darfur and what happened in Rwanda and Uganda. We have millions of people in displacement camps, in refugee camps, because there are a bunch of youths out there committing rape and using those weapons," he said.

"These weapons of mass destruction — whether nuclear or children with small arms — can and will be used because there are still human beings in the world who have the ability to conceive the idea of genocide, of using nuclear weapons."

As proof, he points to his own experience in Rwanda, where extremists sat around a table and cooked up a "detailed plan to mutilate and slaughter 1.2 million people of a different ethnicity. Ultimately they slaughtered 750,000 of them in 100 days.

"A nuclear weapon does the same thing in seconds. But the philosophy that allows the use of either is the same, and it is this philosophy that we must change."

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