

# Sister cities pact signed <sup>BFP</sup> 10/15/88



JYM WILSON, Free Press

Burlington Mayor Bernard Sanders, left, and Yaroslavl Mayor Alexander Ryabkov sign an agreement establishing 'sister city' relations.

## Mayors hope sister city pact will strengthen U.S.-Soviet ties

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Yaroslavl, a city of 640,000 on the Volga River in the Soviet Union, became Burlington's new sister city Friday.

Mayor Bernard Sanders and Yaroslavl Mayor Alexander Ryabkov signed an agreement at City Hall bonding the two cities. The agreement has no time limit.

Sanders said specific cultural, educational and commercial exchange programs between the two communities have not been worked out. Sanders said he hoped people from all walks of life, but particularly children, will become involved.

Ryabkov said the new relationship "will help to strengthen our friendship between our two peoples."

"We especially hope that our agreement will help to prevent confrontations in the future," Ryabkov said.

The agreement was signed on the last day of an official visit to Burlington by Ryabkov and two other government officials from Yaroslavl. Yuri Novikov, director of Yaroslavl's medical college and Sergi Verkhovets, director of a machine factory, traveled with Ryabkov.

The Soviets visited downtown businesses, the hospital, the

university and other public facilities during their five-day stay. They said they were impressed with the quality of goods available to Burlington residents and the sophistication of medical equipment at the hospital.

Their trip followed a visit to Yaroslavl by Sanders and other city officials last June.

Ryabkov, speaking through an interpreter, said he hoped agreements such as the one signed by Burlington and Yaroslavl will help to "lessen the danger of nuclear conflict."

Sanders said such agreements offer people from both countries a chance to "reverse the trends of history in which more and more money is being spent on weapons of destruction while enormous human needs are being unfulfilled."

"I hope that what we are signing today is the beginning of something that for years to come will blossom and involve hundreds if not thousands of people," Sanders said.

Before the Soviet delegation was taken to Burlington International Airport to board a plane for New York, Ryabkov extended Burlington and Vermont residents an invitation to visit Yaroslavl.

"We will always be happy to take you in," Ryabkov said.