



Half the World

by Claudia Jones

A GRASS ROOTS FERMENT of American women for peace, of tremendous proportions, is sweeping the land. This ferment is one of the prime keys to broaden, deepen and organize the fight for peace in our land where atomaniacs itch to open World War III and to drop the atombomb, abhorred by women in every clime, every nation on the globe.

"Weeping Mothers Ask Evacuation of Korea" scream headlines in the NY Post—with a UP dateline. Here in Birmingham, scene of this story, one mother who did not give her name, said one of her sons was killed in World War II; another was a prisoner of war 11 months, and a third participated in four invasions. Her youngest son, 18, has just received orders to report the first of next year. Is it any wonder she cried: "Won't somebody help me keep my son?"

Reflection of this sentiment was the magnificent historic action of over two thousand New York women—mothers, wives, sisters—Negro and white, young and old of many political persuasions, who converged on 36 hours notice when the call came from American Women for Peace, in a vigil for peace at the UN on Nov. 30.

In this light then, I was extremely interested in the comments of Eleanor Roosevelt on this magnificent UN peace women's action. Writing without preliminaries in this wise in her regular column she stated:

"Now I want to speak about the demonstration which took place outside the Security Council the other afternoon. A group of women went out there and their petition for peace was touching. It showed how little they understood the situation, but spoke of the yearning of every woman's heart, when she sees her men in danger. It was, of course, a Communist inspired demonstration, but I am sure most of the women had no idea that this was so." (NY World Telegram, December 5, 1950)

Imagine! Mrs. Roosevelt, herself a mother of 4 sons and several grandsons, a symbol to millions of women as a lover of peace and human rights while admitting the women's peace action was "touching" assailed the women for "how little they understood the situation."

What, may we ask, is necessary to give credit to women for understanding that the world may be in flames and that the fight for the very lives of their children, their men folk, their nation is a fight which if it is in their basic democratic interest to speak up and seek to influence?

Mrs. Roosevelt may choose to ignore it, but every woman in the land, on the very day the women petitioned for peace, clutched at her heart in a gnawing fear because of the brazen announcement of President Truman that he would use the atombomb in Korea and China! Must those bombs be dropped and children turned to atomic dust before Mrs. FDR will grant foresight to women? Of course, the women acted with conscious awareness.

And Mrs. Roosevelt properly had to note that this "yearning for peace exists in every women's heart" regardless of her political convictions!

The women acted and were aware of "the situation"—now widely admitted to be caused through adherence to a ruinous military and foreign policy based on "containing Communism"—an impossible and false task, a McCarthy-McCarran-MacArthur policy which has caused thousands of American and Korean casualties, and have brought the world to the brink of war with the people of China.

That Mrs. FDR rebaited the women's peace action was unfortunate to say the least. But if, as she says, the women's peace sentiments were "touching" and that it was "Communist inspired", does this not imply that Communist women, whom she holds up as a "bogy" to peace fighters, coincide in their actions and policies for peace with the wide sentiments of the masses of women for peace?

In the same rebaiting vein, the thing that "troubles me above all," wrote Eleanor Roosevelt, is that "it might be that the FBI may list some if not all of these people who were in these two groups, and five or ten years from now the fact will prevent them from getting certain jobs they may someday want to hold. They don't think of this but some one ought to tell them." More shame to the F.B.I.!

Well, in so "telling" the youth and the women, Mrs. Roosevelt has told us something. For her perspective, despite lamentations for peace, is obviously not one of peaceful solution, but war and fascism in the next decade for American youth and women. It is because women will continue to act in their majority to unite for peace, to support for example, the postcard campaign now being sponsored by peace forces everywhere to "End the Korean War Now" — "Bring the Boys Home" that this perspective will fail. Perhaps too, that will strengthen the backbones of those who in former times symbolized human rights, women's right and advancing democracy, but whose fear of the people leads them into blind alleys of speculation, red baiting and inevitable distrust of the masses of women.