# The Meaning of the Kasenkina Incident

By Claudia Jones

**The recent statement of Mrs. Eleanor S. Gimbel, national chairman of Women For Wallace, in which she glibly asserts that there is "no personal freedom in the Soviet Union," as exemplified in the Kasenkina case, cannot but help contribute to the anti-Soviet, red-baiting war hysteria atmosphere so rampant in our country today.**

Mrs. Gimbel saw fit not only to express "grief" for the "nervous Russian woman," Kasenkina, and to criticize the Soviet consulate for its actions in this case, but commended the schoolteachers Kasenkina and Samarine **"for preferring life in this country to life in the U.S.S.R."**

Having done this, it is "logical" that she then proceeds to the assumption that our aim in fighting for U.S.-U.S.S.R. friendship and peace, which she supports, is **"to make our America strong and to see Russia become democratic."**

Thus, unfortunately, is a model example, of how yielding to anti-Soviet hysteria on the Kasenkina case helps to disarm the whole fight for peace. Once you accept the press lies that the issue involved was personal freedom, etc., you miss the whole significance of this scandalous incident as a provocative step towards war.

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**MRS. GIMBEL** herself admits that she did not closely follow the case. But she was not at all averse to accepting the "chapter and verse account" of Dorothy Dunbar Bromley, **Herald-Tribune** writer, whose views are known to be biased against the Soviet Union and the Communists.

Far more was involved in the Kasenkina case than Mrs. Gimbel's contention or that of the press that the two Russian school teachers prefer to live in this country. The Kasenkina case was essentially a State Department and FBI-inspired violation of diplomatic agreements with the Soviet Union, which has already injured agreements for good will and friendship between our country and that of the Soviet Union.

To fail to indict those responsible is to see with only one eye. It is to absolve government responsibility for such provocations, which, in the Kasenkina case, was clearly exposed in the collaboration of the FBI and other government agencies with the Tolstoy White Guard crew, hostile to the Soviet Union and to the cause of U.S.-U.S.S.R. friendship and peace.

Specifically on the question of relative personal freedoms in the United States and the Soviet Union, Mrs. Gimbel said:

**"Whoever thought that there is personal freedom in Russia? It was a very human thing these teachers did. They like it here. I like it here. There's no question that it is much nicer to live in America."** (New York Herald Tribune, August 29).

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**IT DEPENDS,** of course, where you stand when you discourse on personal freedoms. But to those who are targets of lynch mobs and goon squad activities, there is only a mite of difference between responsibility for the actual crime and failure of government to prosecute and punish the real criminals.

This is one of the distinctions which must be noted when we compare relative personal freedoms of people in the Soviet Union and the United States. For there are some personal restrictions on personal freedoms in the Soviet Union. For example, wage slavery is completely abolished. No one has a right freely to exploit others in the land of Socialism. Racial discrimination is outlawed. No lynchers have personal freedom to roam unmolested. I have no doubt if a proposal were made to restore chattel slavery in the United States, which we consider outmoded today, Mrs. Gimbel would join me in seeking to curb those who advocate it.

Clearly, it is one thing to engage in controversial discussions of relative personal freedoms in the United States and the Soviet Union. Such a discussion would be welcome for Communists and non-Communists alike. For one thing, it would show that any equalization of responsibility for the war danger, as Mrs. Gimbel inadvertently does, is bound to obscure the real aggressive role of American imperialism, whose policies threaten world peace.

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**IT CAN HARDLY** be said, moreover, that we in this country, can lay claim to any superior personal freedoms which are enjoyed by the majority of the American people. When Mrs. Gimbel expresses horror that she wouldn't want her government "to lock her up," it becomes necessary to ask whether she relates her feeling of horror to the current denials of personal freedom as evidenced in the "loyalty oaths," the Un-American Committee attacks on the trade unions, the arts, the deportation deliriums, the Dixiecrat attacks on the Wallace Southern meetings, the contemplated jailings of the members of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, the slaying of port agent Robert New, Jr., the Mundt-Nixon Bill, and the monopoly indictments against the Communist leaders.

Surely Mrs. Gimbel must relate these denials of personal freedoms to life in the United States. No doubt this is one of the reasons for her support of the Progressive Party which she correctly characterizes in her interview "as nothing more or less than an indigenous thoroughly democratic American movement." But Mrs. Gimbel should know, if she does not already, that one cannot tip one's hat to red-baiting or anti-Sovieteering without helping reaction.

One cannot be all things to all men and women, not even if in so doing, one hopes to avoid being "smeared" and "egged." Obviously, however, Mrs. Gimbel's statement was particularly useful to the pro-GOP **Herald Tribune** editors, who gave it more space and emphasis than has thus far been received in that newspaper by either the National Women for Wallace or its national chairman. No doubt, anything that can red-bait the Progressive Party is another chink in their war hysteria armor. All the more so, if it comes out of the mouth of a Progressive Party spokesman.

This by no means infringes upon Mrs. Gimbel's right to express her opinions and estimate of the Soviet Union or of the Communists. Undoubtedly as an adherent of progressive capitalism, her views differ from ours on many points. The one thing that is required, however, is that, in expressing her opinions, she relates their effect on the cause she serves. If this is done, she will find that there is only one way to fight the warmongers and that way is to stand up, defy, challenge and expose their anti-Soviet, red-baiting, pro-war motives. This is the heart and core of Progressive Party policy, which Mrs. Gimbel elsewhere in her press interview ably defends when she restates a section of its platform to the effect that the United States has the greater responsibility for peace because we have the "greater power for war."



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