

War & Women's Peace: The antiwar Greek comedy, *Lysistrata*, by Aristophanes (411 BCE) tells of the women who barricaded the public funds forums and withheld sex from the husbands to end the Peloponnesian War and to procure peace. *Lysistrata*, the story's protagonist who leads the women, translates to, "she who disbands armies."

Wu Zetian was the only female in Chinese history to rule China effectively. As emperor during a peaceful and culturally diverse Tang dynasty (618-906), her reign was a time of relative freedom for women. Contrary to Confucian beliefs against rule by women, Wu elevated women's positions. They contributed to culture and politics and did not bind their feet nor lead submissive lives. Wu professed the ideal ruler was one who ruled like a mother over her children. She reduced the army's size and stopped the influence of aristocratic military men by replacing them with a government run by scholars. Fair to peasants, Wu lowered oppressive taxes, raised agricultural production, and strengthened public works. Wu Zetian died peacefully at age eighty in 705 CE.

The Lovedu were a society of single mothers in South Africa around 1600. They lived by traditionally "feminine" ideals of peace, tolerance, compromise, and cooperation under the rule of Modjadji queens. The queen who needed no army was dubbed devious and evil by European invaders who could not break through her diplomatic skill to avoid war. Male Boer traders considered her pacifist stance immoral. But Africans considered her a wise ruler and paid her homage. In the 1890's armed Boer settlers attacked and claimed much Lovedu lands. Still, Modjadji III, ruled peacefully.

American women formed the Female Peace Society in 1820. The European Women's Peace League, the first transnational peace group, was established in 1854 by Frederika Bremer, a Swedish feminist. Bremer said, "Separately we are weak and can achieve only a little, but if we extend our hands around the whole world, we should be able to take the earth in our hands like a little child." International antiwar movements were on the rise. Women of diverse backgrounds from multiple countries bonded in international womanship for peace.

Lucretia Mott was one of the leaders of the Universal Peace Union (UPU) founded after the Civil War in 1866. It grew out of the American Peace Society adopted during the Civil War. The UPU membership was gender equal as were its leaders. They labored to remove the causes of war and to abash all resorts to deadly force. They promoted principles of love and nonviolence, immediate disarmament, and a general arbitration treaty among nations. Because of them, laws in Pennsylvania regarding conscientious objectors were minimized.

Despite the terrible carnage of the American Civil War that left American women grieving the loss of life and wanting another way to resolve conflicts, Julia Ward Howe wrote "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." But five years later, reading of the Franco-Prussian War which devastated much of Europe awakened a consciousness in her. Howe questioned herself not only as to why is it that nations do this to one another, but also what might women do to spoil the spoils of war. She wrote her Mother's Day Proclamation to women worldwide of their sacred right as mothers to protect the human life. She traveled to London in 1872 to initiate a Women's Peace Congress, and began observing Mothers Day devoted to the advocacy of peace doctrines.

In 1917 Russia, with 2 million soldiers dead in the war and with living conditions abhorrent, Russian women united in a strike for "bread and peace." Men joined them and on the following day crowds had swelled. Virtually every industry, shop, and enterprise had ceased to function. Almost the entire populace went on strike. Czar Nicholas I ordered military intervention, however, the military was no longer loyal. Over 80,000 troops mutinied or joined the demonstrations. Four days later Nicholas was forced to abdicate and the provisional government granted women the right to vote.

Women for Peace, co-founded by Bella Abzug in 1971, is often cited as a factor in the adoption of the Limited Test Ban Treaty. Among the first Americans to oppose the Vietnam War, Abzug called for Nixon's impeachment and was elected to Congress in 1970 on a strong feminist peace platform. Her first official act demanded a date for U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam.

Sources: <http://www.womeninworldhistory.com/heroine6.html>; *Looking for Lovedu*, Ann Jones; <http://womenshistory.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ/Ya&sdn=womenshistory&cdn=education&tm=37&f=11&tt=14&bt=1&bts=1&zu=http%3A//www.swarthmore.edu/Library/peace/DG026-050/DG038UPU.html>; <http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=05/05/06/142226> http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_Strike_for_Peace; Women Lit the Fire That Burned Draft Cards, Louise Bernikow, todaynews@womensenews.org, 10/01/07