



Joseph Gerson: US Foreign Policy, Japan and Ramstein

NOTE: The following transcript may not be 100% accurate

Joseph Gerson: My name is Joseph Gerson. I work for the American Friends Service Committee, which is a Quaker based justice and peace organization in the United States. It has a Nobel Peace Prize.

I do a lot of both education and organizing US foreign and military policies. Our peace and economic security program focuses primarily on the US wars in the Middle East, and military preparations in Europe, confrontation with Russia, the military build-up in Asia-Pacific. Worked for that a long time. I've worked on nuclear disarmament.

And I worked with a number of national and international networks, including the Peace of Planet network, which we organized in time for the 2015 nuclear non-proliferation treaty review conference. I'm on the steering committee for the No to Nato, No to War network, which will be organizing a counter summit in Warsaw this July at the time of the Nato summit. And I'm on the board of the International Peace Bureau. So I keep busy.

Joseph Gerson: Well, it's really quite complex. Many of us have been concerned that it may have Orwellian aspects. I wrote an article, in which I asked, what's the best way to hide a trillion dollars worth of spending for nuclear weapons and new delivery systems, or to hide 7,000 nuclear weapons. Well, the best way is to go to Hiroshima, lay flowers and divert public attention.

We've been reading in the Japanese press, that it's going to be difficult for him to meet with survivors. And that he plans to take the time to

A number of us have been working on a statement, which will be issued tomorrow, signed by many leading US academic figures, political peace movement figures and others, urging him to meet with all the who come, to announce an end to the trillion dollar spending for the new generation of nuclear weapons, warheads and their delivery systems. Urging him to call for the beginning of the good faith negotiations to which the United States is obligated, in the nuclear non-proliferation treaty to call for good faith negotiations to completely eliminate the world's nuclear arsenals.

And we urge him to make the apology for what was essentially a war crime with the a-bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We don't expect we'll get that. And, actually yes, they are horrified to read that in the Japanese media, I think NHK, he had said that, it's really a happy occasion to be celebrating the end of this animosity with his activities with the Japanese prime minister Abe. In fact Abe is the grandson of a man who was charged as class A war criminal, the equivalent of Albert Speer in Germany, the munitions minister for Japan. CIA nurtured his career, made him the prime minister. He then rammed through in a very undemocratic way the extension of what had been the secretly imposed US Japan military alliance. And now Abe is trying to turn the political and cultural clock back to the 1930s.

His cabinet only recently reaffirmed that Japan has the right to possess tactical nuclear weapons, and his vision of a revised constitution is just a total assault on Human Rights. It makes the emperor the center of the state again. It's really quite horrible.

Joseph Gerson: Well, actually I'm here at the moment in New York at the left forum. And yesterday we had a panel on NATO. And so to understand NATO, which provides ultimately the basis for the US to have a Ramstein base. It was designed not only to contain the Soviet Union, which really was not a threat in 1949, but also to cap German militarism and to reinforce US control over Western Europe. And Ramstein has been a central pillar in all of this. So, on one hand, to understand this political and military function within Europe.

But then, as we know, Ramstein played a central role in the continuing war in Afghanistan, a war fought in violation of the UN Charter, and which has had devastating consequences for the people of Afghanistan. As you know, Ramstein is the center of AFRICON. And unknown to most people here in the United States, the US military is deeply active across Africa right now. In part it's in response to Boko Haram, and Islamist terrorism. But at the same time it's there to reinforce US access and control over the resources and markets of Africa, and to reinforce our competition with China for influence in Africa.

At the end of the cold war, we did a tour, principally women, who came from communities where there were US military bases. And I remember very well her talking about how planes had basically used German school buses as targets for simulated attacks, the incoming within 30 feet or so, totally terrorizing the children. So it's had a deep, deep impact.

The idea that these bases provide economic stability is part of the propaganda designed to keep them there. Sure, there are some people who make with their shops and sometimes with prostitution are making money off of the bases. But alternative economic development is fundamentally important and possible.

I guess, I would add, being Jewish, that some jobs simply should not exist. You know, concentration camps for example or the extermination camps in Germany and Europe during the Nazi rule, well, they sure created jobs, but those were jobs that shouldn't have existed.

And these foundations of war empire, the possibility of nuclear war, these are simply jobs that should not exist. And the money should be used for real developments and human needs.

Joseph Gerson: My most basic message is, I wish I could be there with you, to be a part of it. But short of that, I wish you courage, inspiration, I wish you fun, a willingness to be arrested is necessary, and I wish that it helps to build a movement.

