

## Tax Day Rally Speech – April 15, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Joseph Gerson

Friends, 10 days ago, we marked the anniversary of Martin Luther King's prophetic "Beyond Vietnam" speech. Back then he told us that "When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered."

Our tax system reinforces institutional racism, the materialism and wealth of a new super-rich nobility, and unprecedented militarism.

Our country has been at war for the past 16 years – almost a generation! We spend more for today's Pentagon than during the Cold War.

Our country is at war in seven nations. We've just dropped the biggest non-nuclear weapon in history. It shocked the world, but didn't add to our security.

Today Trump is threatening North Korea with a first strike nuclear attack. But, there's an obvious alternative to catastrophic war in Northeast Asia: Build on the Iran deal with a freeze of Pyongyang's nuclear program, verification, halting massive U.S. and Japanese regime change military exercises, and negotiations to finally end the Korean war that began 68 years ago!

Friends, The U.S. military budget equals that of the world's next 7 biggest military spenders – Combined!

Trump's \$54 billion increase in military will make it equal to the total of the world's next 10 biggest military spenders. That increase alone is the size of Russia's **total** military spending

Add the billions for so called Overseas Contingency Operations, which is a Pentagon slush fund, the black budget for so-called "intelligence" agencies, and the costs of militarizing the police and

immigration controls, and it's a \$1 trillion – a thousand billions - for annual military spending.

Washington plans to spend another trillion for a new generation of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems.

Like Russia, we have about 7,000 nuclear weapons – most of them twenty times more powerful than the Hiroshima A-bomb. An exchange of 50-100 of these weapons could cause global cooling and a famine killing up to 2 billion people. A massive exchange would result in nuclear winter, ending of all life as we know it.

A \$ trillion to end all life as we know it.

What would a trillion dollars buy?

- More than 5 million typical U.S. homes
- A year's salary for 18 million teachers
- 14 million clean energy jobs for a year
- 15 million 4-year college scholarships
- 400 million children receiving low-income healthcare for a year

Nearly 60% of the federal government's discretionary spending goes to the Pentagon. Health and Human Services get a paltry 6%. Housing and Urban Development 3%. Before Trump moved to silence and slash the Environmental Protection Agency, in the face of Climate change and rising oceans, energy got 1.5%.

The U.S. we all know is becoming a second world nation. We have a homelessness crisis here in Boston and a dire lack of affordable housing. What's Trump doing about it? Cutting HUD's budget by \$3 billion. Thousands of people will soon be added to the homeless rolls.

My daughter and millions of young adults are strapped with student debt, sentencing them to wage slavery and a loss of freedom. But, in countries like Germany, France, Sweden and others - none are as rich as the U.S. - higher education is free. Not to mention elementary and high schools that have books for all and well paid teachers.

Their trick? Spending a smaller percentage of their national wealth for their militaries.

Trump's budget funds 10,000 more border agents and the round up, jailing and deportation of millions of innocent immigrants. Remind you of Germany in the early 1930s? 20+ billion for Trump's Great Wall. Remind you of the oppressive Berlin and Israeli walls.

China, Japan, and most European nations have modern subways and rail systems. Here, our subways don't run when it snows, and you can barely get anywhere by train.

Who benefits? Daddy Warbucks, United Technologies, General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, Boeing, their CEOs with Himalayan salaries, and stock holders who reap super profits.

Friends, like our Budget for All referendum victory several years ago, our rally and events across the country are not an end but a beginning. They need to be followed by support for the Progressive Congressional Caucus's People's Budget; demands to see Trump's tax returns, penny polls on street corners, phone calls, letters, e-mails, visits and where necessary sit-ins; and talking to our neighbors.

Most of all it means building issue integrated movements and remaining tenacious and imaginative in our campaigning for peace, economic and social justice and environmental sustainability. More important than coming out today, is what you'll be doing next week, next month and next year.

I'll conclude with King's words of fifty years ago: "A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death." This is not the future we want for ourselves and future generations.

Dare to struggle. Dare to win!