

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

Peace and Conflict Studies Program

University of California, Berkeley

May 17, 1986

by Johan Galtung

Department of Politics
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey 08544

May 1986

Dear graduates, dear parents, dear relatives, dear staff, dear faculty--dear everybody, all folks--I understand that to be appropriate Californian English for the occasion.

When we started peace studies back in Norway in 1959 it was very clear from the very beginning that there were three components in the definition of this field, to be created. There was, of course, the basic idea of exploring the conditions for peace, including the meaning of that problematic term itself. Second, there was the idea that this exploration had to be interdisciplinary; that no discipline, be that international relations, sociology, history, psychology, anything had any kind of monopoly on exploring this particular territory of intellectual inquiry. And third, the idea that the exploration had to be international, that no nation or groups of nations or civilizations had any monopoly on peace, that we all had to be in this quest together, one way or the other.

Today, on this beautiful occasion with our dear graduates assembled in front of you, with gowns carrying the colors of the rainbow the word "international" carries a particular if somewhat limited meaning: you are Americans, and I as a Norwegian make the occasion international! USA and Norway, that is already something although on future occasions one might perhaps go even further in internationalism.

It gives me a special pride to be here today, as a Norwegian. Not only is this an occasion of personal honor and fulfillment, of

dreams coming true. But it also happens to be the national day of my country, celebrating May 17, 1814 when, as an outcome of the Napoleonic Wars the super-powers of those days decided that we no longer belonged to Denmark because Denmark had sided with the losers but might be given as a reward to Sweden because Sweden had been with the winners. There was a short interlude with independence, take-overs were not effectuated that quickly those days. A constitution was drawn up as the country's Constitution, for the free monarchy of Norway, on May 17. A democracy was instituted that gave voting rights to less than ten percent of the population, and after some time we were in "personal union" with Sweden meaning that the foreign policy of Norway had to be that of Sweden, with shared consulates, for instance, with Swedes on top--as seen from Norway.

Of course this was an unstable situation. Norwegian nationalism became a very strong force carrying on its back the best achievements of Norwegian art in music and fiction and theater so far, until the bonds between Sweden and Norway burst in 1905, almost one century later.

And at that point something happened which has very much to do with what we are celebrating today. A secession took place, an obvious piece of conflict resolution in a basically inequitable situation. Structural violence was reduced between the two countries--not necessarily within the two countries. And the remarkable thing was that this took place without an outburst of direct violence between Norway and Sweden: war was avoided. Of course, it is

difficult to assess how close the war really was. No doubt there were angry Norwegians who felt very badly about not having a chance to act out some of their grievances in a more physical manner on some real Swedes, not only rhetorically and at a distance. No doubt there were also Swedes who were of the opinion that ungrateful Norwegians should be taught a lesson--there were teachers eager to teach other peoples "lessons," the rules of international relations as they saw them--in those days as in ours.

Nothing of this happened. Why? Was it because of a summit meeting? Was it because of brilliant diplomacy, of the art of negotiations? In short, what does it tell us about conflict resolution between two countries?

None of this, or at least not very much. Rather, it looks as if the modifying and motivating element was found not in the relation between the two countries so much as within one of the countries, and that country was not Norway. Rather, it seems to be the consensus among historians that the restraining influence by Swedish people on the Swedish establishment was the decisive factor. And who are the Swedish people in this connection? Some characteristics seem to emerge relatively clearly: working class rather than bourgeoisie, social democrats rather than the other parties, people attached to trade unions rather than others, devout christians rather than more ritualistic adherents of that faith, and perhaps women rather than men. In short, we get some of the same profile as in the struggle against slavery: educated

middle-class and working class, relation to labor party and trade unions, christians and not necessarily in the established church, women and for the case of abolition of slavery also one particular nationality, the British. In other words, it sounds exactly like Greenham Commons, like the heroic women who have done more to make the resistance of the majority of Western Europeans (according to the public opinion polls) to the ever increasing arms race visible to the rest of the world than anybody else, going on, year after year.

Does this mean that we have to rely upon educated British women with ties to trade unions and labor parties, related to moral and religiously inspired movements forever? And given the fertility of the British at present, will we have enough of such women for the future? Or do we have to find other approaches in addition, such as, for instance, massive training programs in peace and conflict resolution? Let me leave that problem aside for the time being, and continue along the line I was developing: Norwegian secession from Sweden. What I was indicating was something with considerable implications: even if the problem was in the inter-state system, it might well be that the solution was in the intra-state system, in this case inside the Swedish nation, more developed than Norway at that point in history, perhaps also at present as exemplified by its independent stance relative to super-powers, by the positions taken by Olof Palme who may or may not have paid for that with his life.

In and by itself there is nothing more mysterious in the idea that problems and solutions may be located in different parts of a system than in the idea that the solution to the problems of high fever from an infectious disease may not necessarily be in placing ice bags on the body to lower the temperature even if this may be meaningful in the short term. What is indicated is only how important it is to have a population conscious and sufficiently well mobilized to act as a restraining force on the aggressive impulses of its establishment. For this to happen one obvious condition is democratic control, which is much more than having free elections: it presupposes a social body almost organically woven together by a rich tissue of organizations, some of them being political parties capable of reaching the grassroots and accessible to the grassroots, of dialogues horizontally and vertically up to the so-called decision-makers. And it presupposes sufficient freedom for all types of nonviolent articulation of citizen concerns.

But even that is only a necessary condition. If the population itself is aggressive, filled with self-righteousness and perhaps even with Chosen People complexes the more democratic the country, the more catastrophic the consequences! Hence another basic source of conflict resolution and peace lies in the cultural substratum, giving meaning to what happens in the world and defining, more or less, how one should react--nonviolently, with respect for others.

I say all of this for a very particular reason that has to do with the themes chosen by the ten graduates we are celebrating today.

Try to look at the themes from the point of view of a so-called "realist", a major trend in mainstream thinking on international relations in this country. He would look at the list as it is presented in the program and it will hardly look convincing. He would find in the list "Interpersonal Relationships", "Injustice on Poor Families"--it sounds much too micro-level, much too intra-national and concerned with structural violence rather than direct violence. The next one, "Third World Regional Conflict" looks better. There is such a thing, but "the real thing" is, of course, super-power conflict. Then it gets worse again: "Cross-Cultural Conflict Resolution"--what does culture have to do with it when we know that they all behave according to the same logic, the self-interest of sovereign states in the inter-state system, as described by Thucydides millennia ago and what he said at that time is equally valid today! "Cultural Roots of Non-Violence" sounds totally flaky, as if non-violence cannot be brushed aside by anybody with a little determination. "People's History", it almost sounds as if there are people, human beings in the world when we know that war and peace are properties of the inter-state systems, sui generis, at its own level, "people" or not. "Women and Social Change" certainly does not make it sound better, nor does "Social Problems and Resolutions".

But then comes the only glimmer of hope: "International Affairs and Global Peace" and the graduate has a name almost like that great realist, Waldheim! But that little light is extinguished

by the shadow cast at the end: "The Origins of Culture and Value Assumptions as they Contribute to Building Alternatives Towards Peace". In short, much too much culture, much too much structure, much too much intra-state instead of inter-state and much too much micro instead of macro! And the realist will get his suspicions confirmed.

So let me say as someone who has tried to work in this field for thirty years: I think you are right! I am with you as my example of the intra-state solution to an inter-state phenomenon up in the high north of Europe was selected to indicate, but not 100%. The realists are totally wrong if they try to exclude your concerns from the area of peace and conflict studies; they belong, every single one of them and are the mature fruits of a rich and well thought out program. But the realists are right if they claim that the territory they have selected for themselves, with the pretense that it covers the whole world, military relations in the inter-state system, is insufficiently treated.

~~It looks bright,~~ the future of the program. You stand for a counter-trend or countertrends in plural, that is obvious from the theme selected and also from the resistance you have encountered. But from that it does not follow that the mainstream was all wrong, and the countertrends are all right. The problem is how to integrate the two, in a rich blend. Perhaps it might be recognized that the mainstream is strong on empirical reality but has spun itself into a seemingly unbreakable cocoon that makes them rather incapable of contemplating potential and more desirable realities, whereas the countertrend may be better at the latter but sometimes weaker at

understanding particularly the harsher aspects of empirical reality. And that should not be identified with criticizing the arms race and deploring the consequences of a nuclear war; everybody is capable of doing that. It is more a question of understanding the deeper mechanisms behind these phenomena, some of them best understood by the realists even if they by far overdo the role of rationality.

I could now say that much of this has something to do with certain aspects of the United States as seen, perhaps in a caricature but I think nevertheless relatively realistic fashion, by a foreigner like myself. To me the East Coast in the field we are talking about, things relating to peace and war, is very high on knowledge, and very low on morality. Things are seen in terms of what is true and false, less in terms of what is good and bad. The language chosen to express what is seen is rigorous. The rigor of language is then often mistakenly interpreted as indicative of a rigorous understanding of a rigorous reality. Morality is certainly not standing in the way of the quest for knowledge. A moral backbone seems often to be missing but can easily be compensated for by a hide so thick that no moral backbone is really needed for the person to stand upright.

Through this great country one comes ultimately to the West Coast with the opposite configuration: morality very high, but concrete knowledge on international affairs correspondingly low. The world is perceived in terms of good and bad, not in terms of what is true and what is false. Knowledge is not given too much of a chance to stand in the way of moral rectitude, be that of the

liberal type towards the north or the conservative, even reactionary, form found towards the south. I could then say that if knowledge decreases and morality increases, as we move westwards, in a linear fashion, and we see both knowledge and morality as necessary conditions for good peace politics so that they enter multiplicatively and not additively in an effort to capture them both, then we get a parabola with the maximum in Peace Politics Potential, PPP, half-way to the west, what you Americans in a mathematically absolutely correct fashion refer to as Midwest.

Of course, this type of speech goes down much better in Minnesota-- incidentally populated by quite a lot of Norwegians--, Iowa, Kansas, or Missouri and some such places, than on either coast. And I am equally aware of the fact that the world in general, and the United States in particular, is filled with what to a mathematician is known as a singularity, such exceptions as the realist component of the UCB, quite strong, respectable and respected. And I could also add to this that there is something tragic in a country where decision-making is made in a surrounding of knowledge without morality, where the moral opposition to official rigor, which may also have a connotation of rigor mortis, is found at the maximum distance from decision-making, and where the ideal surrounding for peace politics is found at considerable distance from either, both from decision-making and from the intellectually most rigorous part of the country. At the same time as that decision-making is supported by the reactionary knowledge-free moralism of the deep southwest of the country, from Texas westwards. A strangely divided country.

But these are only random fabrications by a visiting foreigner, cast in the mold of the typical outsider except for being a citizen of one of

the U.S. client states: decidedly pro-American but for most aspects of foreign policy anti-Washington. But let me now leave this commentary on the PACS program behind and come closer to our dear graduates.

You are pioneers, you are brave, you are blazing trails. All that is very good, but let us also look at you from the point of view of your parents of whom, in principle, there should be twenty present today. They may agree that you are brave, pioneers and trail blazers--but they also have agonizing questions: how are you going to make a living out of all this? Moral virtue is fantastic, knowledge makes no harm, but sooner or later a job is even better! So, what kind of opportunities do we have in this field? I can tell you one thing: if you have come this far you have already shown abilities that will make it impossible to stop you from going further. You will make it, but exactly how I am of course not in a position to predict. So let me only attempt to outline some possibilities, very soon leaving empirical reality behind, going into potential reality.

What kind of jobs should there be for graduates from a top university in peace studies? Let us first just state the obvious: of course, in peace research and in peace education, and there is a quite high number of institutes and universities waiting for you. They will demand of you that you develop your studies further which no doubt you will be both willing and able to do. But I am not so sure that this is primarily what you want or even ought to do. I

think you have more important tasks: in peace action, as peace workers. And the concrete question becomes a more tricky one: what kind of opportunities are there, or more correctly formulated: what kind of opportunities should there be?

To start with the inter-state system: we are 162 states in the world, 159 of them are members of the United Nations. In principle they all badly need a Department of peace; capable of employing a certain number of peace workers with exactly your type of training. A Minister of peace should be as obvious in the government of a decent country as a Minister of the environment. No doubt he will have a problematic relation to the Minister of defense, and particularly to a Minister of ["]defense with offensive weapons[']--an unfortunate contradiction. But the relationship is not necessarily that much more problematic than the relationship of the Minister of environment to the Minister of industry. In other words, there are precedents, it is not that new.

However, with the way violence and the means of violence are distributed with the state presumably having a monopoly over ultimate violence, the peace worker will perhaps feel more at home in the non-state system. And that divides into the sub-state system and inter-state system, the sub-state system being the almost countless municipalities in the world, about 2,500 of them in this great country alone, all of them badly in need of a peace worker, at least as much as they are in need of one or several decent social workers.

What would the peace worker in a municipality do? He would know everything relevant for municipalities that are interested in nuclear freeze zones. He would run the local peace library, serve as a catalyst for citizen discussions bringing together hawks and doves and other animals. He would be knowledgeable, and a good practitioner, of the foreign policy of the municipality, its links with brother and sister municipalities in other countries in the world. He would be the local organizer of the participation in the twinning of cities movement, and provide information for what is going to happen sooner or later: municipalities will increasingly refuse the heavy hand of the national government in having a monopoly on foreign policy, and start developing a foreign policy of their own.

I have mentioned state actors and sub-state actors; prominent among the latter are of course also organizations of all kinds, including corporations. I think increasingly they are going to have not only foreign relations and foreign policies, however national they may look. They are also going to have peace policies, because that will increasingly be demanded of them. So what would be more reasonable than an increasing demand for professional assistance in this matter, for people who are able to conceptualize peace and war, who have in their mind and experience a repertory of possible policies, and ability to explain not only what and how, but also why?

And from that it is but a small step to international peoples' organizations or international nongovernmental organizations as they are also called: there are today 4767 of them in the world. An astounding number, some of them are flaky, some of them are very far from that. They tie states together, often in such a way that they may be said not to have a peace policy but to be peace policy. But they have to relate to each other. In the sixth continent of nonterritorial organizations they are also in need of a foreign policy, or even a peace policy, only at a higher level, of a higher order, as they are less condemned by past experience and future ambitions to fill the present with aggressive policies.

And then, at the end of the list are the inter-governmental organizations, 376 in number as of now. Some of them are strong, the United Nations system being the strongest part. In many of them the state system is too recognizable, even reinforced-- particularly in the military alliances. Nevertheless, we are dealing here with actors of terrific importance, more than most others in need of explicit peace policies not only because they necessarily fall short of their often stated goal of working for peace, but in order to do an important job even better.

I could then add to this list the transnational corporations so often forgotten in this context: there are at least 5000 of them. If they exercise violence it is not of a direct but more of the structural kind. If they are interested in peace politics it would be in that cumbersome and problematic field, divesting themselves not only of the money but of structures hostile to the realization

of human needs and goals all over the world,

So, look at all of this: is it not impressive! On paper you have thousands and thousands and thousands of jobs, at least 50,000 of them! In a rational world there would have been 50,000 graduates, at least, in peace studies and at most ten from military academies! But we are not quite in that world yet, some might even say we are far away. Of that I am not so sure, I simply do not know, nor do I think anybody else has much basis for knowing.

All that can be said at this stage is that you are on the right track. Looking through your themes again I think the concrete work possibilities that will be opening up in this and the next generation, tied to state and non-state actors as listed above, show the relevance of the themes of your choice. Seeing the world the way I have just tried to indicate nuclear conflict among super-powers remains a terrifying nightmare, but in the conceptual territory of the realm of discourse for peace studies it is only a little corner. You have been placing lampposts all around this territory, with the exception of that corner, and received with grace my little, critical remark in that connection. In fact, what you have been doing seems to me to be to prepare yourself very well for the two concrete tasks of building a more peaceful world: that of taming the nation-state, making it less aggressive along military, economic, and cultural dimensions, and that of linking, tying the nation-states better together by strengthening just, equitable ties between them. In doing so you may be accused of going around the major problem. But maybe that is the best method?

So it remains only for me to congratulate you and your parents, the staff and the faculty and, indeed, the University of California at Berkeley. One of the best universities in the world and a public university, dedicated to the quest for knowledge and its application for human betterment. This is not the only program of peace studies in the world, nor in the United States. But it is an important one, and Berkeley has done what one would expect from Berkeley: serving as a beacon for others to be inspired and be guided. I am sure that beacon will shine even more strongly in the years to come, that Berkeley will live up to what is expected from this site of higher learning: the role as a pioneer.

I am not going to send you out into life or anything like that; when I was your age I was always deeply skeptical of middle-aged types like me giving speeches, pretending that I had a mandate to send anybody out into life. You are perfectly capable of doing that yourselves. What I can do is only to congratulate you, wish you the best of luck, knowing that you will not only remain students of peace but also become its practitioners.