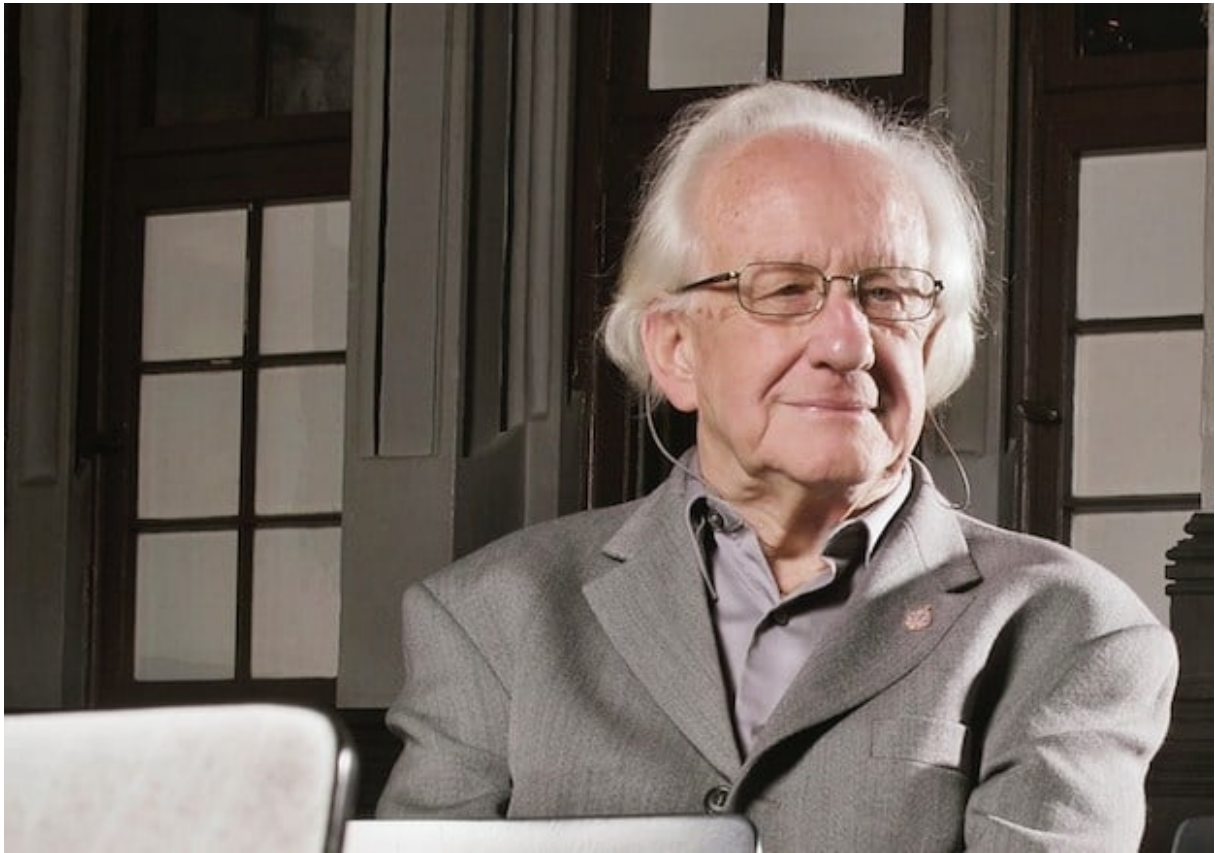


Lover of Tyranny, Not Peace



Johan Galtung

by Bruce Bawer

On Saturday, at 93, Johan Galtung, the founder of the academic discipline known as Peace Studies, died in an affluent suburb of Oslo in his native country of Norway. During his long life, he published about 150 books and received innumerable awards and honorary degrees from institutions around the world. On his death, Norway's largest newspaper, VG, [hailed](#) him as "a pioneer and a giant." One news website [described](#) him as "a towering figure," "revered," "a beacon of hope," and a man "driven by an unwavering commitment to creating a more peaceful world."

Who, in fact, was Johan Galtung? Raised in privilege, he despised Western freedom and prosperity. When he beheld the

West, all he could see was “capitalism”—a supreme evil, in his eyes. His concepts of “structural violence” and “structural fascism” made it possible for him to argue that the United States was in fact far more brutal and oppressive than the USSR and Red China. He cherished the dream of seeing Washington, D.C., in ruins. Celebrated as a hero of peace, he argued repeatedly that the way to achieve peace was for free countries to refrain from resisting aggression by totalitarian enemies. In 1956, accordingly, he advised Hungarians who’d just liberated themselves from the USSR not to stand up to the Soviet tanks that came in to crush their brief revolution.

Galtung didn’t love peace. He loved tyranny. He loved the USSR. He sneered at what he saw as America’s fetish for Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Andrei Sakharov. In 1972, he celebrated Fidel Castro for having freed Cuba from “imperialism’s iron grip.”

Most of all, he loved Communist China, which he described as “endlessly liberating” and “a master teacher” when it came to reevaluating the supposed virtues of liberal democracy.

Writing in *City Journal* in 2007, I [noted](#) Galtung’s belief “that the Chinese loved life under Mao.” Yes, Galtung acknowledged, Mao’s regime was “repressive in a certain liberal sense.” But he added that it was “endlessly liberating when seen from many other perspectives that liberal theory has never understood.” Indeed, Mao’s China made it clear, in Galtung’s view, that “the whole theory about what an ‘open society’ is must be rewritten.”

Note that Galtung penned these words at a time when up to 2 million Chinese people—many of them “capitalist intellectuals,” a category into which Galtung would have fit very neatly—had been murdered in the name of Communism. Whatever the evils of Communism, in other words, the evils of free countries were, for Galtung, always far worse. He created Peace Studies based on this idea; it continues to flourish.

And yet, for all of Galtung's putative enthusiasm for societies that you or I would describe as totalitarian, he decided to live out his life in the free world. And he died there, too—in a hospital in Bærum, the most notoriously affluent of Oslo suburbs.

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