

## **Public Lecture 13**

### *Panel on the Influence of the Ideas of 1989 on Foreign Policy*

**Public lecture at the London School of Economics as part of the ‘Ideas of 1989’  
Public Lecture Series**

**Panel:** The Rt Hon Robin Cook, Foreign Secretary, UK, Jan Kavan, Foreign Minister, Czech Republic, George Papandreou, Foreign Minister, Greece

**Chair:** Professor Mary Kaldor and Professor Lord Desai (LSE)

Public Lecture 13 (2000)  
'Panel on the Influence of the Ideas of 1989 on Foreign Policy'

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### **Mary Kaldor**

This is the final lecture in the series "The Ideas of 1989". We are extremely privileged to have here at the LSE three Foreign Ministers, two of whom are actually LSE graduates and all of whom were engaged in discussions with opposition groups in the late 1980s. They have all tried to put the principles of those times into practice.

### **Robin Cook**

It is a pleasure to be invited to take part in this discussion. It is an even greater pleasure to share the platform with two distinguished colleagues and close friends. I would like to say a particular word of respect to Jan Kavan, because since we discussed 1989, it is appropriate to start out by remembering that for Jan Kavan 1989 was more immediate in its direct significance than for the rest of us on this platform. For Jan it meant an end to over a decade of exile in Britain, during which time we had worked closely together and I therefore approach this discussion in a spirit of double humility to his own experience and personal involvement.

Before we came in we were actually asking each other where were we in 1989 and what were we doing. I have to confess that in 1989 I was trying to liberate the NHS from Conservatism and in that sense Jan had a much more successful 1989 than I did.

I have been invited to discuss the impact of the ideas of 1989. I have one complicating problem in doing so in that having read the previous lectures in this series I discover that there is no consensus on what the ideas of 1989 were. I, therefore, am going to cheat a little bit and discuss the lessons of 1989 for diplomacy in our time.

I will start with one clear, obvious, lesson of 1989. That is that it is impossible in a modern world and in a modern economy to suppress human freedom indefinitely. Technology makes it impossible. When fax machines first arrived in China they posted a soldier with a bayonet beside each fax machine. It is almost comic in its impossibility - of trying to control the flow of information, of knowledge, of communication, that modern technology makes possible. There are probably more personal PCs in the world than there are assault rifles. No amount of border guards can put a check on the immense power of the click of a mouse and the internet, and the spread of information that goes with it. Knowledge is power, control of a monopoly, of the means of production, distribution and exchange requires a monopoly of knowledge. Country after country discovered in 1989 that their condition for authoritarianism - the control of knowledge - does not exist in the modern world. It is not surprising that the strongest tide of that spring in 1989 were in those countries that did have access to Western television.

On that premise, I draw a conclusion about our own activity and about the conduct of our own Foreign Policy. I believe that in this world, we have an obligation. Here in Britain, with our long-standing freedom, but also in countries of Central Europe with their new freedoms - we jointly have an obligation to give what support we can to those peoples in other countries campaigning for the same freedoms and the same human rights that we ourselves take for granted. I have had some difficulty over the last two years in arguing for this principle. Indeed, there was a debate for a full day in the House of Lords this week complaining about how I dare to interrupt the pure pursuit of national interest through foreign policy with other considerations of values. I personally find it repugnant to argue that foreign policy should not reflect our values. I also find it a piece of arrogance for the right wing to argue that case, because what they are actually saying is that reactionary values are consistent with the national interest and progressive values are not consistent with the national interest.

I profoundly disagree with that point of view. In the modern world it is our national interest to pursue human rights and freedom for other peoples. Countries that live at peace with themselves are countries that are more likely to live at peace with their neighbours. Economies where people are free to use their talents and their creativity are countries that will develop faster. The responsibility to give them human rights and the obligation on us to support that may be objectively correct, but it is also in our subjective national interest.

Another dimension of the impact of 1989 is that it did continue to crystallise the declining authority of the state. In Soviet Communism there was an equation between the power of government and the authority of the state. We are now in an era in which the authority of the state and the domestic economy are being limited on the international stage. Internationally, no country is an island from the powerful trends of the global economy. No state has its authority unimpeded by the development of international organisations in the wake of globalisation, such as the World Trade Organisation. Domestically, economic initiative is passing from top planners to those who show innovation and enterprise and creativity on the work floor or at the workstation. The most powerful trend and political development is actually not towards greater integrated modern super states, despite the claims and fantasies of the Euro sceptics, but towards devolution, towards de-centralisation. It is towards the passing of power from the centre of the state down to the regions and down to its people. As those developments bring into question some of the untrammelled authority of the state of the past, it has raised entirely new questions, stronger and more powerful after 1989, as to whether the state can be the soul arbiter of the legitimacy of its own actions.

I should think one of the most remarkable, symbolic, diplomatic developments since 1989 was the conference in Rome in 1998 which approved the creation of an International Criminal Court. One hundred and twenty nations voted for the International Criminal Court on that day in Rome, only seven opposed it, none of them countries from the Soviet world. What they were doing was something of great historic significance in the relationship between states. They were accepting the creation of an international judicial system with supremacy over national court systems, based on the fundamental principle that gross violations of humanitarian law are not the sole business of the state in which they occur, but they are the business of all humanity. If we are to take that forward we need to do so in the context in which

we recognise that it is no longer sufficient for states to claim they have the sovereign right to decide what is going to be legal and what is going to be illegal. The international community can both determine and enforce that. I think the most important diplomatic debate we will have over the first decade of this new century is now to take forward the question; when is it right, and how do we decide when it is right, for the international community to intervene against the consent of any one individual state?

First, responsibility for ending conflict, for observing humanitarian law must rest with states. Of all forms of intervention, military intervention must be the last resort. But we now have an obligation to recognise that the international community does have a right to intervene where the sovereign state is permitting or practising genocide or gross humanitarian violations. That is only possible because we have now, since 1989, arrived at an international community which is no longer divided into blocks but is composed of individual states willing to come together globally, to reach agreement on global governance, not in a sense of a global government, but rather on a global rule of law.

Now I come to the last impact of what happened in 1989 that I would like to address. That is the very powerful impetus it has given to the concept of Europe. First of all, freeing Austria and Finland to join the European Union and come out from the no-man's land of the Cold War. Secondly, and much more strategically significant, the powerful urge and determination of the countries liberated from Communism themselves to join up with the European Union and to forge a common European homeland. It is not perhaps a new idea so much as a very old idea. In the age of Mozart it would have been well understood that you could travel freely across Europe and exchange ideas and culture freely while the idea of the division of Europe into two separate camps, which we witnessed for half a century, would have been regarded as incomprehensible.

Now we have a chance to make that Europe whole again. The iron curtain has gone, we must tolerate it being replaced by a curtain of gold brocade separating the wealthy rich countries of the present European Union from poorer countries beyond the borders of the present European Union. We have to open our doors and admit and embrace those new democracies. Not just as an act of economic reality, but also as a matter of principle so that we can create and forge one common area of freedom, justice and shared values within Europe, which is also the best way in which we can underpin in those countries the gains and the benefits of 1989.

I began, possibly mischievously, by asking what were the ideas of 1989, whether there was a collection that you could say "these were the ideas of 1989". But the fact that there was not a manifesto of programmatic ideas in 1989 does not diminish the powerful impact it has had, and the Europe we look at today is a consequence of what happened in 1989. We have just celebrated the turn of the millennium. Some pedants argue that we have celebrated it one year too soon, that we should actually have waited until the end of this year. I have no problem with that, we can just do it all over again at the end of this year. After all, in Scotland we have celebrated the New Year every year for the last millennium and we are going to do it again for this millennium. But I think if we honestly got it wrong as to when was the right time to celebrate the new millennium, it was not that we did it one year too soon, but rather that we did it

11 years too late. Spiritually, politically, in terms of the geo-political map of Europe, we actually should have celebrated the advent of a new millennium in 1989 and when history looks back on events at the end of the 20th century I think our own celebrations on millennium night will be passed over as of much less historic significance, marking much less of a turning point than that moment of momentous, joyous importance when the Berlin Wall was brought down by ordinary people. Thank you.

### **George Papandreou**

I was thinking of my question as you were speaking and maybe you have partially answered it. 1989 was a momentous moment for all of Europe and certainly one of a renewal of a democracy, particularly for Eastern Europe. Yet today in our European Union which espouses and promotes democracy, not only within Europe but throughout the world, we are also seeing the need for a renewal in our societies. In a sense we do not have a perestroika in Western Europe, and maybe we did not really need it, but there is what we call a European democratic deficit. I do not know if you would link this with 1989 or the challenges we lost with the East/West polarisation. How do you see that we can use this new momentum in Europe which I believe is both a unification but also a democratisation to create the structures of a real deepening of democratic processes for our European citizens?

### **Robin Cook**

I would like to congratulate George, who earlier today had an hour in which to ask me questions and has now managed to come up with a new question!

I think that you are quite right that democracy is not some sort of absolute which is there in great beauty and stands as a monument, unchanging and in stasis. For democracy to function, it has to grow and it has to change. It has to move with the society that it represents and it has to move with the technology of the society that it represents. It is rather bizarre that for the first time in the House of Commons we are now discussing the way in which we vote. We still vote on the principle of the sheep fold, whereby we move through two doors and are counted by head as we go through - a technology that has been around since the mid 16th century, when the House of Commons first started voting.

There are exciting possibilities within Europe to plug the democratic deficit. There has been a genuine problem of accountability across the continent. The larger that democracy becomes, the more difficult it is to relate with individuals. However, we now have, through electronic means, the ability to make available European documents, European debates, European policy platforms in a way we never have before, direct to people in their homes. If we are going to have a larger European Union, a European Union of maybe 26 or 27 nations, not just of 15 nations, then it is important that we look at the transparency of the Council of Ministers. It is a rather uncomfortable thought that the Council of Ministers is the last body left which does make and pass legislation, but without transparency. As part of the process of enlargement we need to be clearer about the accountability of what happens in the Council of Ministers and who votes for what particular proposition.

Lastly, there is the interface between what ministers do in the European Union and how we are accountable to parliaments. The last Treaty did represent a very significant shift in the powers of the European Parliament, not much remarked upon yet, because they only came into force in May 1999. But, by May, the European Parliament had exercised its power to dismiss the whole of the Commission and the European Parliament will never be the same again. The Commission may not be the same again either, but the European Parliament will certainly not because having discovered power and having exercised that power, they quite rightly and quite properly are going to be more assertive, more aggressive and more demanding of the accountability of the Council of Ministers and of the European Council. That is healthy, but at the same time I do think that for us in Britain one of the challenges we must face is how we can make our own European actions more accountable and more scrutinised within our European Parliament where we have a lot to learn from the parliaments of other nations. Possibly one of the reasons why we have not had such an informed or such an enlightened or such a progressive debate on European affairs, and Britain's place in Europe, is because we have not yet had an adequate scrutiny debate and we do not have enough transparency in Britain of what we do in Europe.

### **Jan Kavan**

Robin, in 1985 you supported the Charter 77 Prague appeal, which challenged the then prevailing state of 'Normalizace' and argued for the need to constantly respect the close links between democracy and human rights. I remember that politicians who were in power at that time, including those in this country, argued that the implementation of such ideas would in fact destabilise Europe. We were then not in power and, therefore, they argued it was relatively easy for us to push for such ideas. Today, we, in our many speeches, frequently say that human rights should still be fully implemented in different countries throughout the world. You, yourself, talk about ethical foreign policy. My question is, are there any restraints today in this push for the implementation of various basic human rights conventions in different parts of the world where they are being violated? Are there some new dangers of destabilisation as a result of pushing for the implementation of human rights?

### **Robin Cook**

I do not think there is anything that should limit us in the demands that we make. I do think we should also reflect upon the very substantial way in which the tide and trend of international affairs have been with us. If we look back over recent years, it is striking the extent to which democracy has been on the advance. Within Africa we have recently seen Nigeria come from one of the most brutal and vile military dictatorships back into an elected presidency which has begun, quite rightly, by reforming the military. Across Latin America the pattern of governments is dramatically different from the pattern that predominated when we were younger men and when Latin America was ruled by military dictators, none of whom now exist there. Within Asia, emerges not a uniform, but nevertheless a very clear pattern of a growth of democracy and with it of individual freedoms. That said there are immense problems.

I want to enter one reserve to what I said earlier about the authority of the state since Jan asked about the limitations. Whilst it is important that we now debate the hitherto

absolute sovereign right of states to control their people and to do what they like within their states without extra state challenge, at the same time we must recognise that the state in a form that is accountable to its people is a progressive concept. I know from what I have witnessed in Africa, particularly in places like West Africa, for example Sierra Leone, where there are some of the greatest violations of human rights, part of the greatest fear for ordinary people arises not from the exercise of too much state control but from the absence of any form of state power and the failure of the state. The challenge for us over this coming century - when states are going to be more and more interdependent than independent - is to make sure that we get that balance between exercising the right of the international community to limit the ability of states to do what they like with their people, and at the same time finding creative ways of building the civil society to support functioning, established states in places where they do not exist at present and where as a result the people do suffer in their human rights.

### **Mary Kaldor**

Thank you very much Robin. We are very grateful to you for sparing the time to come to the LSE.

### **Mary Kaldor**

George Papandreou is someone who, in the 1980s, was active in the peace movement. He was present in Prague in 1990 when we founded the Helsinki Citizens Assembly, which came out of the dialogue between the peace movement and the East European opposition groups. Since he has become Foreign Minister he has done an incredible job in bringing about a rapprochement with Turkey. He was, I think, instrumental at the recent Helsinki summit in giving Turkey a prospect of joining the European Union, which opens up all kinds of possibilities for peace in the eastern Mediterranean. He has also done much in the Balkans to promote all kinds of links at the level of civil society. So I am extremely pleased to welcome George Papandreou.

### **George Papandreou**

Thank you very much, Mary, for your kind words and I would also like to thank Robin, although he has left, for his tolerance of our questions.

Dear Jan and ladies and gentlemen, it is a great opportunity to dwell on the significance of the year of 1989 - which was one of so many important ideas and events - and to see how it has influenced foreign policy. I think it is of central importance to the world and certainly to south eastern Europe. The ideas of 1989 were about democracy and the democratisation of the process of foreign policy also. The ideas that drove politics to such momentous change were about the role of the citizen in society, the relationship between the citizen and the state, the freedom of the citizen to associate, to act in a manner that is civil, to pursue interests towards a common goal or good. There were ideas that confronted centralisation with the benefits of decentralisation, market versus the state, central bureaucratic control verses public participation. But I do not want to be too arid or technical about this for these ideas were, above all, ones that inspired hope and gave courage to the few to lead the many towards a new freedom. In short, the events, the personalities, the ideas of 1989 were

and remain emblematic of a world in flux and certainly Jan Kavan is to be commended for his role in these very momentous events.

What occurred in 1989 in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union was a dramatic variation on a global theme. I say global because when I think of my personal experience back in those days, Greece of course was not part of this 1989 revolution. However, some years earlier we also lived under a dictatorship, part of the Cold War situation for a number of years, and saw what exile was or what torture was, or what imprisonment was, or what lack of freedom was. At the same time we saw with 1989 the opening up of our region and access to our neighbours with whom we had no real contact for 50 years. Finally we were able to meet with them. However, those meetings exposed a fear generated by ignorance and friendships took time to mature. I do not think that the whole region has yet reached that necessary maturity to see these differences of cultures and the kaleidoscope of ethnicities and religions as something very powerful and very positive rather than something to fear. However, I remember, as Mary mentioned, in 1990 when we met in Prague, we made contact with the Balkan countries through meeting their people in non-governmental organisations out there and we all began to work together.

That was very important, and it so happens that out of this a number of us became ministers, while the rest of us responded to other callings. But it became very important to create a counter balance to the more nationalistic fears that grew out of the lack of knowledge, or the vacuum of contact, that had been there for so many years, indeed, for more than a generation.

One of my central points is that this civic experience of civil society, having already been so important, will continue to be important - and increasingly so - as we move ahead towards a globalised society. States then were on the retreat, crippled - many by debts - and this increased the pressure on those who were excluded from participation and the betterments of either economic or political life. Therefore civic initiative in many parts of the globe was already and spontaneously filling the vacuum left by States or established institutions that were no longer capable of providing security from cradle to grave, or even just simple freedoms. Of course, some turned to religious institutions, others to ethnic affiliation. Some used their affiliations to advance their interests in the most violent of ways. Others saw recourse in small interest groups that spoke to issues of health, gender or environment. But in their sum they constituted a radical change in global action and politics. The citizen was assuming new responsibilities and, moreover, was creating new links of solidarity across frontiers. Whether it was the private sector mobilising the tidal wave of globalisation, whether it was technology through the cybernet, or cyber world, whether it was environmental catastrophes, human disasters - AIDS, for example, reminding us that diseases have no frontiers, - it was something which showed us all that the sovereignty of the State was not enough to deal with the suffering of individuals. It was action by civic groups that invariably forced the international community to acknowledge the need for responsible action.

1989 brought these disparate trends into sharp focus. The unimaginable had suddenly become inevitable. An entire system which shaped the post-World War II international politics collapsed. With hindsight we might say that the edifice was possibly ready to crumble. I do not believe that without the efforts of the myriad of

small and larger civic initiatives we would have seen what we saw; that is, peaceful internal changes in many areas, unluckily not all, and of course the former Yugoslavia is one of them. This was a time when totalitarianism imploded, democracy exploded and I think there was one fundamental lesson to be learnt. At the time the central idea was that all ideas were necessarily entertained. It was in a sense a post-modern pot pourri of concepts which were emerging from diverse traditions - Liberal or neo-liberal, from social democratic, to anarchistic, from religious communities, from grass roots social workers to communitarianism. What one expected from this very pluralistic approach was that one should build institutions and democracies which tolerated, negotiated and sought a new form of consensus around all these ideas.

This leads me to conclude that 1989 was about the creation of functioning democracies and not just democracies of the former eastern block, but democracies anywhere. It proved that we could develop a new contract, if you will, with the institutions, which would not allow hate, prejudice and exclusivism to usurp what was now meant to be civil. Hence, I arrive at the further conclusion that central to functioning democracy today is the need for a healthy, vibrant, civil society. A civil society that is fundamentally civil, one that expresses a variety of ideals and creates space for the individual to live. A civil society that is capable of engaging with other institutions such as the State and the emerging private sector. I put the question to Robin Cook because I believe this is not something that happened in Eastern Europe or in Southern or South-eastern parts of Europe, but is something which is a much more global phenomenon and which must be central to what we are doing in Europe as a whole and in our more traditional democracies. We must deal with issues such as the so-called democratic deficit and look at new forms and institutions to increase participation. Much more redefining is required, I would say, of what our democracies should or can be in a very different world of technology, of globalisation, of many ethical differences caught in new dilemmas.

Let me dwell on these issues, for in some parts of our region of Europe we took the wrong turn in 1989. I am talking about south-eastern Europe and particularly the former Yugoslavia where we saw a civil society usurped, where we saw institutions hijacked, where we saw potential participants in the building of new democracies trapped by the choice between treason if they opted for democracy or nationalist intransigence. This is also a challenge to Europe. A democratic challenge to unify Europe was brought out by the consequences of 1989, a prospect for unification which at the same time means a prospect for real democracy to flourish in areas such as the Balkans.

I remain persuaded that we can build democracies in our region and I do believe that civil society can become the engine of these democracies. I only have to think about the turn in our relations with Turkey and I am persuaded of the indisputable role of civil society. What then do I understand of the role of civic initiative in that period and what do we need to do about it now?

Look at the variety of inspired activity, when churches, environmentalists, mothers, youths, pensioners began to organise themselves seriously. Each expressed their own ideologies, but they also collaborated with each other - this happened very much even in our region. The longer term impact of the emergent civil society is that we see it assuming vast responsibilities. Civil society is not just to be treated as the fashionable

flavour of the moment by those who enjoy social engineering - it is the livelihood, the lifeblood of the citizen. It is what should help compensate for what some of us in the EU refer to as the democratic deficit, in which citizens feel themselves more and more alienated from vast and distant centres of financial, bureaucratic and political power. This is not an eastern problem or a problem of former communist countries, it is a problem we have to deal with today in our societies and in doing so see how we can help other societies also. We have learnt of civil society that it is only truly civil when it is inclusive and not exclusive. This is very important. Throughout much of the former eastern block we have been able to witness the benefits of a civil society that has opened its doors to all, but we have also seen the tragic consequences a civil society unable to muster the capacity to do so when submerged in a sea of prejudice and paranoia. In most of former Yugoslavia the future of democracy and its civic institutions was hijacked by the politics of nationalist hatred. The region and its civic institutions may have lost a decade in building new functioning democracies, however, cannot and will not lose hope.

In 1990, Jan Kavan, Mary, and myself together with Pascal Milo, who is another Foreign Minister of Albania, met with many others to discuss all these issues. Civil society then brought us together after a period when contacts had been very rare in the region. Today the three of us - Pascal Milo, I and Jan - are Foreign Ministers. We deal with the affairs of state, but we also share the vision and belief that affairs of state must involve the citizen. The citizen is represented through the ballot box and his or her interests are mediated if one buys the institutions of civil society which are very important and cannot be relegated only to the ballot box. This allows us, I believe, to speak the same language even if one may disagree with one or other policy.

I cannot be persuaded that without an act of civil society contributing to the development of transparent and inclusive societies we will not have functioning democracies and we will not be able to democratise foreign policies. Certainly, we also need to see civil society as dealing with some of the challenges in our region which foreign policy addresses. Yet it is civil society that would more active in this case. In countries where states are weak corruption thrives: black markets, grey markets, paramilitaries, mafias. Here again is an area where civil society can play a healing role, but certainly this is where the European Union must offer support not only within the EU but also in many candidate or even future candidate countries. Such support should create high standards and apply these very meticulously in order to help the development of grass root or democratic organisations and pluralism within the societies. If these issues are not addressed we then run the risk of discussing stability while the seeds of instability are being sown.

At the top of the agenda is the immediate rapid development of institutions and notably the civic sector as a fundamental element of regional stability in south-eastern Europe. Here I want to be quite specific about my vision of civil society. These are organisations loose or tightly knit, large or small, that represent all sectors of life and all levels of society, but they must have some common characteristics. As organisations they must assume the institutional characteristics of being accountable and transparent about the interests they serve. They must be willing to co-operate with other institutions in localities from other sectors. One looks to the day when civil society, the private sector, the local government and international world actively engage in the development of policies, local or world-wide, and where they hold each

other accountable. These institutions of civil society must be able to communicate and associate beyond their own frontiers. In short, I would say that we as politicians should want to see a civil society in our region developed within each country but also associating freely and substantially across frontiers, particularly so as foreign ministers. These relationships are not the prerogative of states or corporations, they are the rights, I would say a necessity also, for our foreign policy and for our citizens. Here I want to quote a Nobel prize winner, Amartya Sen who is a friend, or rather paraphrase him by saying that freedom and democracy is in fact at the heart of development, whether that is strictly economic or whether it is more widely social and cultural. This, I think, is an idea which must be seen as part of the legacy of the 1989 changes. Our responsibility as politicians is to be part of this educative process, which is so vital to our democratic institutions, because democracy is actually a constant education in democratic practises. Politics today is much more so an educative process because, firstly, the types of issues involved need an educated public, but secondly, they need a public which participates and not a passive one that simply waits to be convinced. And a public which not only participates but takes initiatives to deal with a very complex world, a very difficult world where politicians certainly do not wave a magic wand to produce solutions. Whether these initiatives are local or whether in the cyber world, they are part of the development of and are part of a democratic dialogue in deepening these democratic structures.

Finally, let me give you an example to prove how important is a policy of developing the civil society that was so much a part of the 1989 revolution. We have been doing our research at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Athens on what type of non-governmental links exist between Greece and other countries. Our initial findings, and they are very preliminary, tell us that at present there are at least 150 non-governmental networks - not organisations but networks - linking Greek civic institutions with other countries in our region. Many of them are local government links, some are academic, others represent women's groups. The fact is that they exist, they constitute real voluntary initiative. I consider them a true asset, not a liability. These networks are the very structures that will help shape a new foreign policy. They can truly help democratise our foreign policy in this globalised world. They work with us, take initiatives and they in fact promote what we call people's diplomacy, or citizens' diplomacy.

I want to conclude then with what I consider to be proof of the role of civil society living within an active democracy that influences foreign policy. I believe that if ten years ago I had announced to the public of Greece that they should take any initiative they wished to help Turkish earthquake victims the reaction would have been, at least, modest. We did not have many civic organisations at that point. Greece also took a number of years coming out of a dictatorship to create its own civil society. There was a climate of fear then, vis-a-vis the Turkish side, and mistrust was pervasive. Last August, immediately after the earthquakes in Turkey, I called on Greeks to work through local organisations and non-governmental organisations to demonstrate their sense of solidarity with Turkey and the victims of that terrible earthquake. The reaction exceeded, to my utter joy, everyone's wildest expectations. Yes, I think we were all delighted that Greeks wanted to help Turks. More profoundly, however, I discovered that Greeks had discovered a new self-confidence in their own civil society and that they had a civil society through which they could express themselves and they could be part in creating foreign policy. In doing so they sent a very strong

message, a message of the greatest importance to the elite and political leadership of, not only Greece, but also of Turkey. The nascent civil society there responded in kind, sending its own political message to the Turkish leadership. Then only a month later when there was an earthquake in Greece, it responded again in the same way. These civil societies wanted to help both peoples, for they do not fear their neighbour, and prefer to activate a path to peace than perpetuate an immobility of suspicion. This certainly opened a way to a new millennium, so we had true cause to celebrate our new millennium this year.

With that I do not think I can say more about the ideas of 1989 and their legacy. The facts speak for themselves. Thank you very much.

### **Mary Kaldor**

Well, that was a really wonderful example. Now we have Jan Kavan who, for many people here will need no introduction. He lived in London from 1968-1989 and for many of us he was our contact point with the opposition in Czechoslovakia. I thought that if there are any members of Hackney Labour Party here, they will be very happy that one of their members has succeeded in becoming Foreign Minister and deputy Prime Minister even if it is of the Czech Republic. So he is actually one of us, being a British citizen as well as a Czech citizen. We are very pleased to welcome him back here at the LSE.

### **Jan Kavan**

Thank you. I was asked to say a few words about the ideas of 1989 and how they link to Czech foreign policy.

When we talk about the ideas of 1989 as they were subsequently reflected in the thinking and activities of Czechoslovakian and from 1993 Czech foreign policy, we are really talking about the ideas which preceded the revolutionary upheaval of 1989 and which formed, I would say, an integral part of the processes that ultimately led to the fall of communism and the dissolution of the bi-polar world. I know that a number of observers have maintained that the end of 1989 resulted in no fundamentally new ideas and there can be no denial of the fact that, taken in general, some of these ideas behind the transformation from central planning to a market economy and from the monopoly of the Communist party to a pluralist democracy together with the requirement that the state maintain sovereignty and autonomy with foreign policy, were hardly new notions.

On the other hand, consider the perspectives you can take on these ideas. As perceived then by the countries that were a part of the Soviet military and political block, they were indeed revolutionary ideas and carried immense social impact. I would say that despite a very high degree of repression in what used to be called the normalised Czechoslovakia, between 1969 and 1989, opposition to the communist regime gradually formed. This opposition was to become the source of intellectual stimulation, that eventually finds its place also in the Czech politics after 1989. The regime, despite its suppression, was unable to suppress the opposition or to prevent discussions on topical questions and issues of policies. But it would also be wrong to completely ignore another important period of Czechoslovakian history and that is the

'Prague Spring' of 1968. I think that, despite the differences that can be drawn, the opposition in the 1970s did follow up, or use the basis of the experience of 1968. At the same time I have to admit that from the point of view of foreign policy, the Czechoslovakian attempts at reform in 1968 brought very few impulses for an autonomous foreign policy that would be in line with the traditions and interests of Czechoslovakia. I remember how, in March 1968 at one of the largest mass meetings in Prague, I alarmed (to put it mildly) one of the leading radicals and one of the closest persons to Alexander Dubcek. This was when, very modestly, on behalf of the radicals, I inserted into the final resolution of that meeting a statement that we would like to have equal friendly relations with all neighbours. Those of you who know where Czechoslovakia is know that not all of our neighbours were of the Soviet block, let alone the Soviet Union.

We cast doubt on the axiom that we had to either accept Soviet leadership in foreign policy or end up making the same mistakes as Hungary did, ones which led to Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. At the end, as you know, the main reason why the Warsaw Pact armies invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968 was not our independent foreign policy but the Czech democratisation process which, from the point of view of Moscow, would have dangerously encouraged democratisation in other states within the Soviet block. Moscow had to stop the disease before it spread through the region. Therefore, our less than independent foreign policy did not save us.

Another important date, generally speaking, was 1975, the Helsinki CSCE Conference, which proved to be, to a certain extent, a turning point in the arguments and reasoning of some of the opposition forces within the authoritarian so-called socialist state. The Helsinki Conference endorsed the territorial status quo and that was something which the Soviet Union at that time was very clearly interested in. At the same time the conference formulated the obligation to observe civil and human rights and that was again something which the Soviet Union was far less interested in. However, at the time the Soviet Union accepted the demand of the West, convinced that it would keep hold of its monopolistic control over internal policy. As far as human rights were concerned they did as little as they believed they could get away with by making a few cosmetic modifications. They relied on being able to get away with paying lip service to conventions, just as they had done in the past, and not actually implementing them. This was also one of the reasons why some opposition leaders in some of the East European countries at that time responded quite sceptically towards Helsinki, perceiving it as reinforcement and in fact legitimisation of the Soviet Union's international status.

The Czechoslovakian Charter 77 based its appearances and arguments on two things: on the international covenants on civil and political rights which were ratified in 1976 by the Czechoslovakian government and on the Helsinki Third Basket. This began to play a major role throughout the opposition activities. At the same time the internal crisis of the system began to deepen and intensify and gradually conditions were created for the opposition movements to break through the barriers that had been restricting their impact. So the dissidents who were, for a long time, solitary figures often primarily defending their own human dignity, their right to live in what we then called decency, slowly became members of a broadly conceived movement for civil and human rights. This movement was, I think, fated by history to, if not lead the way, then to strongly influence the process of dismantling the system and that is

despite the fact that while this was happening, not all British journalists actually noticed it. I remember having an argument then with a well known journalist when I brought to him a joint statement signed by some Polish and Czech dissidents demanding that it should be published in his newspaper. He gave me a long lecture about how although he, of course, highly appreciated the moral integrity of these individuals, this was no real news, definitely no political news, that these people would never influence anything, never change anything, never come to power and therefore why should the British public be bothered by reading such statements? Only a few years later the signatories of that statement read like a role call of presidents, prime ministers, ministers of state, and so on. This indicated that even a British journalist can sometimes be wrong.

I asked Robin Cook a question about the Prague Appeal of 1985. The Appeal clearly challenged the status quo at that time and brought about some new ideas on how to overcome the division of Europe and how to end the Cold War. It was interesting that leading human rights dissidents of Charter 77 who are frequently portrayed here as opponents of Soviet regime, therefore people on the right, therefore very pro-capitalist and so on, addressed the Prague Appeal to the END Conference in Amsterdam which Mary Kaldor must remember well. One of the very few leading western politicians who, at that time, supported this challenge was, in fact, Robin Cook. Many others, including top politicians of the United Kingdom at that time thought that calls for reunification of Germany and reunification of Europe would in fact lead to the end of the détente, to destabilisation, and to disaster.

What was new by the beginning of the 1980s was significant from the point of view of future development concerning, for example, the ideas on which the central European regional co-operation of so called Visegrad countries were based, and indeed in which a wider European co-operation was involved. I think those ideas emerged very much from contacts and discussions between different opposition groups as they then existed in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, and subsequently in some other countries. By a fluke of history I am proud that I was able to help to facilitate some of the cross-border co-operation between various groups in central Europe, but the borders existing then were probably even more impenetrable for human rights activists than the borders between East and West and therefore those contacts had to be arranged, ironically enough, through London. We set up in London together with my Polish and Hungarian friends a foundation called the East European Cultural Foundation. This organisation not only published a journal among whose honorary editors were people like Havel or from Poland Michnik, from Hungary Konrad, and others, it also co-ordinated these cross border communications. We eventually tried to use this communication to formulate joint declarations by hundreds of dissidents from Prague, Warsaw, Budapest, but also Berlin, Belgrade, Bucharest, and Sofia.

It is very interesting to look back at those statements which clearly tried to formulate a kind of a common denominator of this very heterogeneous movement. If I quote from the very first one, which was put together by the Czechs, the Hungarians and the Poles, the signatories stressed the "joint determination to struggle for political democracy in our countries, their independence, pluralism based on the principles of self-management, peaceful reunification of divided Europe and its democratic integration as well as for the rights of minorities". Looking at some of the ideas, I

think certain key publications influenced them at the time, two of which spring to mind. One is Adam Michnik's essay on 'New Revolutionism' which is a first in-depth analysis of civil society, and then Vaclav Havel's essay on 'Power with Powerlessness', which talked about civil initiatives and how, what he called, living in truth could reveal the lie, the deception, the wealth of pretence of the powerful, thereby anticipating and unveiling their future powerlessness. With this insight it is interesting to look at the joint statements because I think they outline some of the ideas which were then clearly formulated by 1989. For example, as I mentioned a few minutes ago the statement which the British journalist refused to publish. Let me quote some of the ideas from that. Those signatories agreed on the statement at a secret location on the mountainous border between Czechoslovakia and Poland. They argued for:

"...a deeper respect for social rights, including the right to found independent trade unions. The idea of political pluralism and self government. Respect for national individual ideas and rights of national minorities. A spiritual, cultural and religious freedom and tolerance. The freedom to search for and create a better functioning, economic system which will provide a space for people's creativity and also grant all workers a real responsibility for the results of their labour and their share of economic decision-making. The idea of a peaceful, democratic environmentally conscious Europe, one which is a friendly association of independent states and nations".

But besides the single source within these opposition groups inside the so-called Socialist countries there were other important sources of inspiration. Some of them came up during the interchange between the human rights opposition groups in the East and, among others, that one part of the west European peace movement which fully understood and emphasised the link between peace and democracy. The activists involved in these mutual discussions perceived the Cold War as a phenomenon which consigned the opportunities for democratic advancement. A phenomenon clearly undesirable from the aspect of the democracy. Also the problem of nuclear weapons and disarmament was seen as a problem of democracy in its broader context. Again, to outline an idea, they have argued that "peace can only be secure if it is a genuinely democratic peace, based on civil liberties and social justice. The implementation of basic civil rights is an ongoing condition for societies to be able to exercise democratic control over their governments for safe-guarding disarmament and a stable, lasting democratic peace on our continent". So, I would argue that many of these ideas, which were then tucked away in letters, statements by activists on both sides, did begin to form a bulk of what can today be referred to as the 'Ideas of 1989'.

After 1989, Czechoslovakia entered the stage as an independent sovereign state. The priority of Czechoslovak foreign policy became, at the time, quite logically the demand for the complete withdrawal of Soviet troops from Czechoslovakia and after some difficult negotiations the troops did indeed leave in 1991.

I remember at the time, we also helped to speed up similar negotiations between Soviet Union and Hungary and between Soviet Union and Poland. In this respect one can probably argue that Czech foreign policy contributed to the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and that this in turn contributed to the euphoric atmosphere of the time. It was understandable that in that mood of jubilation an idea emerged, linked to some of the ideas I mentioned earlier, of removing both military and political blocks as a

prerequisite for the peaceful and democratic development of the world. The Czech Foreign Minister at the time, when he argued for that, echoed an idea expressed in an article he had written in a dissident publication, published even here several years before 1989. To a certain extent we also see some of these ideas projected by the end of 1990 into the Charter of Paris for a new Europe, where the signatories claimed that they are no longer adversaries, that they shall form new partnerships and offer each other friendship. Havel for a short time also began to talk in those terms before several months later acknowledging that this is unrealistic and turning his attention more to NATO. So, some of those views expressed in the first months after 1989 proved to be unrealistic and were later dismissed very much as naïve. But they were sometimes dismissed with too much haste without due attention to the central argument. The basic motivation behind these views still had something to offer. Fortunately many of the other ideas expressed by opposition groups had a longer life. The idea of peaceful co-operation, peaceful solutions to problems and disputes, dialogue on contentious issues, the alluring vision of a united democratic, socially just and prospering Europe. I think these remained valid points of the Czech foreign policy in the early 90s.

By about 1991, another school of thought from the recent past became much more pronounced. Those who believed that the Cold War was ended, thanks primarily to Ronald Reagan's Star Wars or to the Iron policy of Margaret Thatcher, began to be heard and I would say their policies began to prevail. At that essential moment, when new ideas were needed like never before, when the success or failure, of what we then called transformation process, particularly in the economy, was dependent on new ideas, there were no new ideas forthcoming. When it came to the economy, the general argument, the general standpoint was that the money market mechanism had proved itself, that it was sufficiently well known and had been described in the West in detail and therefore the only thing we needed was to adopt it. That standard mechanism was supposed to be able to cope somehow automatically, miraculously, with any problems that cropped up during the transformation process. There were no critical discussions on the more suitable forms of economy transformation. In that uncritical atmosphere of very black and white thinking combined with a kind of emotional response to the preceding totalitarian idea - an emotional response which was a fertile ground for anti-Communist, anti-socialist arguments - it was very difficult to have a critical discussion. Any criticism of the new ideas, let alone even a (sympathetic) recollection of the Prague Spring made one vulnerable to suspicion and regarded as an opponent of transformation or even as a pro-Soviet agent.

The arguments put forward by the advocates of the rapid economic transformation wasn't very persuasive to many ordinary people: "Why should we think of some new systems when there were proven Western systems available?" and so on. Somehow it escaped the founders of the Czech economic transformation that at least part of this standard mechanism was already under increasing criticism in the West. Other parts were subject to a review and yet other aspects were completely out-dated even then. This one true path of economic transformation had some disasters impact both on our economy and on our standing and I think some of the social consequences contributed to what has been perceived as a prevailing sullenness.

To overcome all those consequences of that period will require a lot of time and effort but I think there are some initial positive results with us already. As far as foreign

policy is concerned, it always presents a difficulty with the current minority. The Czech social democratic government has returned to some of the ideals held by dissidents before 1989, but, I think, stripped of that certain degree of naivety which clouded them. To give you an example, in our official foreign policy document approved last year by the Parliament and the government, we say that our goal is an international community of peace, safety, co-operation, democracy and prosperity. To summarise briefly the ideas which survived the test of time will surely include the respect for indivisible civil and human rights; support for civil society both at home and in international relations; peaceful settlement of disputes and conflicts whether internal or international; support for the principles of solidarity and co-operation as they are being projected into regional co-operation, which is why we have renewed the Visegrad Co-operation stifled by the earlier Czech government. We projected that principle of solidarity and co-operation into greater European integration, therefore into our support for the accession to the European Union.

I asked Robin the question on human rights because I think that it is still a very topical issue, but it is frequently perceived as an unsuitably idealistic component of foreign policy, as an obstacle preventing the implementation of pragmatic economic interests. We believe that human rights should be one of the main pillars of foreign policy and in the official policy document we have argued that (to quote), "the Czech Republic is convinced that the existence of political dialogue on human rights is a gauge of the credit worthiness and in the long term the prospect for economic relations with a given state. Czech foreign policy intends to be open and transparent here. It is based on the assumption that objective communication on human rights issues in the present multicultural world is the best investment for the future". If I can just quote from our own vision of Europe I think you will hear the echo of the 1989 ideas when describing the future Europe of which we would like be part:

"The Czech Republic supports the European integration processes and the vision of a united, democratic and socially just, a prosperous, peaceful and tension free Europe. A continent of independent citizens and co-operating regions. The Czech Republic supports all actions which lead to the creation of a community which fully respects human civil rights and social rights of individuals including the right to dignified life in a healthy environment and we support the establishment of a community where citizens make democratic decisions about the administration of public affairs".

So maybe I am naïve. Indeed, many of my friends and colleagues will agree with those opponents of mine who say I preserve the naivety of my dissident times, some of them spent here. Nonetheless, I do believe that the ideas of 1989 are still with us and have still much to offer. I agree that there are many other politicians who would offer you a different interpretation of the ideas of 1989 but this is the one great advantage of being on academic soil, that we can have a challenging discussion about these ideals and the different interpretations, the rights and wrongs.

There is one other issue I would like to mention which I think is crucial today and that is the issue of globalisation and the way in which the forces of technology and capitalism push us ever onwards towards global uniformity at the expense of the individual languages, cultures, religions and national identities. I believe that we should take seriously into account the view that if the principles of solidarity and social justice are not incorporated into the process of globalisation then these

developments will not advance the world, but would lead to the opposite, the collapse of social structures. No major social advancements can have only positive impacts and therefore each advancement needs certain corrective measures. Globalisation can therefore only be economically and socially beneficial for the world if civil societies have sufficient responsibility, energy and capacity to confront and to correct the clear deficit of democracy associated with the conversion of decision making processes from the national to the super-national level. It is interesting to observe the situation of smaller states or medium sized states like the Czech republic, and how, in the face of this globalising integration pushed forward by large states and super powers, their fate is usually viewed with great pessimism. I think this negative attitude is unjustified. Indeed, some economists have concluded that under the conditions of globalisation and internationalisation it is smaller states and nations that can take great advantage of it. After all, we can accommodate the changes faster, as we are more adaptable in our social economic structures, and we could probably come to terms more easily with some of the radically new situations. In the face of new challenges we can be more flexible than can the larger states. Naturally, I do not think we should over estimate the opportunities available to small states, but nor should we underestimate their fears of undue domination on the part of the larger states. Nevertheless, I think that experience so far has confirmed that not only are small states entering complex major development processes, they also have an active influence on them. I would say that the chances for a small state do not lie in its ability to promote complex long-term processes, but in the potential to distinguish and use their completion for its own benefit. This is what the foreign policy of a small state is all about when faced with processes of globalisation. From the point of view of Czech foreign policy these tasks are very new in character and reach. 1989 has made it possible for Czech politics to join in with these processes and gave us entirely new opportunities, we have never dreamt of before. The ideas that led to 1989 and that have been reflected in the development of Czech society may not have progressed in a smooth or especially straightforward way, but they have developed logically. It is this development over the past ten years which has formed the basis for the current Czech politics. I believe that, despite all the mistakes we made, all the shortcomings and all the imperfections, current Czech politics reflect many of the ideas of 1989 and this is preparing us to embrace the challenge of the approaching 21st Century. Thank you.

**Meghnad Desai**

Thank you very much, Jan Kavan.

## **QUESTIONS**

**AQ1:** Would you agree that the ideas of 1989 which have been described as the wish for democracy and civic society have not really been politically defined yet? The disagreements on current Czech politics are so big. For instance, a new movement was founded a couple of days ago called something like 'We've Had Enough'. NGOs are not only acting as in Greece and in Turkey but also in Seattle in a very different way and not agreeing to what democracies are doing at all.

**AQ2:** Would Jan Kavan share with us his views on the human rights situation of Roma in his own country and the rest of Eastern Europe?

**AQ3:** To the Czech Foreign Minister I just want to say, do you feel freer to be a democratic state or is it similar to having a communist state imposed on you as during the Cold War?

**Meghnad Desai**

Thank you. I will give George Papandreu first bash at these questions and then Jan Kavan.

**George Papandreu**

Well, as far as Seattle is concerned, this is just what I was trying to point out: 1989 was not a phenomenon that we should understand simply as pertaining to Central and Eastern Europe. It was a much larger phenomenon. First of all, it was part of getting beyond the Cold War, which in many ways confined foreign policy. For example, some of the smaller countries, like Greece and Czechoslovakia, were confined to following an extremely delineated and specific foreign policy which was meted out through this Cold War polarisation. Therefore, there was little room for manoeuvre into a more democratic world where there were, of course, other types of perils and problems. But at the same time the issues of a civil society and the democratic deficit in a globalised world, not only in the European Union, are there. We do not have right now those institutions we increasingly need; ones which would be democratic not only on a globalised basis but also at the local level to encourage more participation, bring more democratic practices and procedures to our older institutions even in older liberal democracies. So, I think that the challenge in this new year/millennium/century, whatever, is in fact a democratic challenge. It is not simply that we created democracies and that is the end of the matter, we are facing a challenge of deepening our democracies in a very different globalised world and this, of course, is where I see the crucial roles of civil societies.

**Jan Kavan**

Yes, I would agree with the first questioner that the ideals of 1989 have not been defined politically in an unchallengeable way. As I said earlier, everybody is free to interpret individually and put his or her own emphasis on this or that aspect of 1989. For me, the 1989 ideals are clearly related to the freedom of states and individuals to live according to their religions, to enjoy the right to speak, to publish, to organise, to live and work free of fear. The other important idea is to enable people not to be just governed but to participate in decision-making processes which will affect the quality of their lives, to take part in the administration of public affairs. And, to reiterate, there is a clear line of continuity running from the opposition ideas of 1970s and 80s up to now, despite various roundabouts and diversions. This predominant spirit, among other things, centres on the encouragement and promotion of civil society. It is a spirit of solidarity and co-operation, promoting not only respect for human and civil rights but also respect for social justice, upholding a belief that democracy is not just a notion which would enable democratic actions, democratic institutions, but a democracy which is real, which would breath democratic life into those institutions; one which will enable people to behave democratically, which also implies with greater tolerance towards each other.

Now, that would also apply to this new movement which was recently established in the Czech Republic, who call themselves "Thank You, You Can Now Leave", entreating politicians, or I would say certain politicians they do not like, to leave the scene. I have nothing against it for, speaking as a politician and vis-a-vis the last question, I think that people should have the right, even in our current democratic state, to pressure politicians to change their policies or to resign. I do not think that they should replace democratic elections, I do not think that governments should fall simply because a demonstration takes place and people will send a petition saying "you should leave". I think that the democratic elections should be respected even if you do not like the results, but at the same time I do not believe that democracy should be limited to having elections every four years. I think civil society should be allowed to function in its full capacity, and that includes the right of people to organise as many pressure-groups and lobbies as it takes to change governments or at least get the governments to change their policies to ones that reflect the needs of those citizens who think that their interests have been ignored.

Now, this brings me to the second question: Romanies. My belief and my observations are that Romanies suffer discrimination in many parts of the world. However, I think it is a pan-European problem, not just a Czech/Polish/Romanian/

Hungarian problem. There are about 12 million Romanies living in varying conditions but none in ideal conditions in Europe. I think Europeans, and here that applies also to European Union leaders, should perceive it as a European problem and therefore begin to define European-wide solutions to them. I am convinced that obviously there is, both in the Czech Republic and elsewhere, a great degree of discrimination, especially on a local or regional level, be it by a landlord of a pub who does not think that a Romany is good enough for his excellent establishment and therefore bars him from buying a drink there, or an official working in housing policy, employment, or whatever. I would not be surprised to hear that there are policemen who in the call of duty respond in a tougher manner towards a Romany than towards a citizen with a whiter skin.

Having said that Romanies can be and are discriminated in that way and opposing this injustice with all my heart, I also would argue very strongly against the perception that Romanies, not only in the Czech Republic but elsewhere, are systematically persecuted or that there is a policy of treating them as second class citizens. That is not the case. To change their position in a society is a long-term process because you have to change the access to education and that starts from the children who enter the first year of school and need to have pre-school education of at least one year to learn the language so that they would not then be discriminated when they enter school. Even if they were sent to special schools because their language is not adequate, this could be interpreted as being mentally retarded, and there is always a danger of them not getting the right education and being discriminated throughout their lives.

It is a complex problem which we could easily discuss here for an hour. I will therefore conclude that I do agree there is discrimination. I would disagree that there is persecution as defined, for example, by British asylum laws, and therefore I regret that many Romanies do come, even from the Czech Republic, to Britain and ask for asylum. I do understand that asylum is not granted to them. However, I am also convinced that within the not too distant future, the current efforts of the government

to improve the education of Romanians, improve their standing, allow them to take decisions within local councils, regional councils, to take part even in police forces, etc., will help to integrate them into the society.

The last question, do I feel that I now live in a democratic state? Yes, I think I do live in a democratic state, I'm proud of it, happy of it, but I would also remind you that there is no democratic state, at least I do not know of any, which is a perfect democracy, not even the United Kingdom.

### **Meghnad Desai**

I very much want to thank Jan Kavan and George Papandreou for their excellent speeches. I want to thank Robin Cook, because he did in a very busy schedule, spare time to come here and give us a speech. Lastly, I really would like to thank all the many people you do not see on the stage. The staff of the Centre for the Study of Global Governance, who have made this possible and particularly Mary Kaldor