

## **Ralf Dahrendorf Memorial Lecture**

### **Introduction** **João Carlos Espada**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great privilege for me to host this Ralf Dahrendorf Memorial Lecture. Ralf Dahrendorf was my D.Phil supervisor at Oxford, in 1990-1994, and I have an immense debt of gratitude to him — a debt that can hardly be described in a couple of words. He and Karl Popper — who introduced me to Dahrendorf and of whom Dahrendorf had been a student at the LSE, before he became the Rector of the LSE — both of them literally changed my life.

I am not going to bother you with personal details about my debt to Dahrendorf. But you may enjoy knowing some brief details about Dahrendorf himself.

He was born on May 1, 1929 in Hamburg, the most English city in Germany, as he always liked to recall. His parents were also born in Hamburg and his grandparents, maternal and paternal, went to Hamburg from Anglia – the long disputed territory between Germany and Denmark from where the Anglo-Saxons have supposedly departed towards the British Isles.

Much before Ralf Dahrendorf was born, in the mid 1920s, the young lady that would become his mother was cautiously preparing her first visit to England. However, at the last minute, a sudden illness prevented her from doing that journey and made her stay in a small village near Hamburg, known as Hostein Switzerland, where she met her future husband, Gustav Dahrendorf. They were both admirers of England and together decided – as a modest substitute for the failed journey – that they would present their children with names that could equally be used in Germany and England. Thus, the names Ralf – written in the German way with an f, not a ph – and Frank, the name of Ralf Dahrendorf's brother.

Gustav Dahrendorf, the father of Ralf Dahrendorf, was a leader of the Social Democratic party during the Weimar Republic and he devoted himself to politics throughout his whole life. He belonged to the anti-Nazi resistance and was arrested for the first time in 1933, then again in 1938 and once again in 20 July 1944, the date of the failed coup against Hitler.

In November 1944, at the age of 15, Ralf Dahrendorf was arrested by the Gestapo and sent to a concentration camp from where he was released in 1945, the day the soviet troops arrived. The following year, 1946, young Ralf's father was almost arrested again in East Germany, this time by the communists, for refusing to participate in the so called negotiations towards the forced unification of the Social Democratic Party with the Communist party. This double sided experience of totalitarianism – Nazi and communist – and of resistance against them established Dahrendorf's fundamental commitment towards the cause of Liberty and forewarned him against ideological dogmatism:

“I am a Kantian or, if you prefer, I am a Popperian, which is equivalent to saying that for me one of the fundamental aspects of human life is that man can

not answer all questions. If anyone wishes to find out the answer he must be able to doubt what he is told. We live in a fundamental condition of uncertainty ... and that derives from the fact that no man is God.”

Another experience from this same period would mark the young Dahrendorf. The days that followed the downfall of the Nazi regime, and before new institutions had been created, chaos invaded the streets. This led Dahrendorf to observe that there is no liberty without law, without rules and institutions capable of putting those rules into practice. In a book he would publish decades later, already in the 1980s, entitled *Law and Order*, Dahrendorf would write that Rousseau’s dream of a world with no constraints is the shortest path for the Hobbesian nightmare of the Leviathan, the almighty state.

Dahrendorf would later become a prominent member of the Liberal Party in Western Germany, where he was a member of a coalition Government headed by the social-democrat Willy Brandt. He was for a while a member of the European Commission, from which he resigned in the mid 1970s: from then on, he would always define himself as a sceptical Europeanist, not an europhile but not an eurosceptic either. In 1975, he was appointed Rector of the LSE. From 1987 to 1997, he was Warden of St. Antony’s College, Oxford. When I first met him, in 1990, he was Sir Ralf. In 1992 he became Lord Dahrendorf — and very unusually he preserved the dual British and German citizenship.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Today we have the special privilege of having with us, as the Dahrendorf Memorial Lecturer, Mr. Charles Moore, the authorised biographer of Margaret Thatcher and former editor of *The Telegraph* and *The Spectator*, of London — of which, incidentally, I have been a faithful reader for many, many years. I also happen to have been a faithful reader of Mr. Moore’s columns in *The Telegraph* — on Saturdays and Mondays — as well as his *Spectator’s Notes* for many, many years. This is indeed a very special honour, and I would like to express our deep gratitude to Mr. Moore for having accepted our invitation to be with us at the Estoril Political Forum.

It is also a great pleasure and privilege to have as the Chair of this session Mrs Bridgett Wagner, a very good friend of ours for many years, who heads the department of Coalition Relations at the Heritage Foundation, in Washington, DC. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and President Ronald Reagan were both committed friends of the Heritage Foundation. Who else could be a better Chair of this session with the authorised biographer of Margaret Thatcher?

It is therefore my privilege to give the floor to our Chair, Bridgett Wagner, from the Heritage Foundation.

Thank you.