

Estoril Political Forum 2019

27th International Annual Meeting in Political Studies

The Transatlantic Alliance:

75 Years After D-Day; 70 Years After the Founding of NATO;

30 Years After Tiananmen; 30 Years After the Fall of the Berlin Wall

Estoril Palace Hotel, 24-26 June 2019

Opening Address João Carlos Espada

Senhora Reitora da Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Professora Isabel Capelo Gil,

Senhor Presidente da Câmara Municipal de Cascais, Dr. Carlos Carreiras,

Senhor Presidente do Conselho Estratégico do IEP, Dr. Pedro Norton,

Senhora Directora do Estoril Political Forum, Dra. Rita Seabra Brito,

Senhores Embaixadores, Distintos Convidados, Senhoras e Senhores, Caros Amigos,

Gostaria de começar por agradecer a presença de todos nesta 27ª edição do Estoril Political Forum.

Pedia a vossa compreensão para usar agora a língua inglesa, de forma a comunicar directamente com os nossos convidados estrangeiros.

Now to our English-speaking participants and friends:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the 27th International Annual Meeting in Political Studies, now also called the “Estoril Political Forum.” We are delighted to let you know that you are participating at Portugal’s largest annual meeting in Political Studies – and, yes, indeed, almost twenty-seven years have now passed since we had our first meeting, in the Arrábida Convent, in September 1993. We were then no more than 20 participants...

The title of our meeting this year — ‘The Transatlantic Alliance: 75 Years After D-Day, 70 Years After the Founding of NATO, 30 Years After Tiananmen, 30 Years After the Fall of the Berlin Wall — will surely not surprise the friends of the Estoril Political Forum. If there has been a defining permanent feature of our meetings since 1993, this has certainly been our strong commitment to liberal democracy, the rule of

law, free-trade and a market economy — the common ground of the Atlantic Alliance. This common ground, incidentally, is also one of the distinctive features of the hotel where we are. The Estoril Palácio Hotel was the hotel of the Anglo-American allies during the second world war.

This common ground is of course epitomised by the patron of our Estoril Political Forum since the very beginning, 27 years ago: Winston Churchill. We are honoured and delighted that we have with us this year Mr. Randolph Churchill, Sir Winston's great-grandson, who is also a Trustee of the International Churchill Society. I would like to express very emphatically our gratitude for his presence and we emphatically wish that he may now feel he is a member of the Estoril Club, a very special member indeed, and that this will be just the first of a very long series of visits.

Dear Randolph, Thank you very much for coming. It is indeed a great privilege and pleasure to welcome you at the Estoril Political Forum.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Precisely because we share this common ground of liberal democracy that Winston Churchill epitomised in the 20th century, precisely because of this common ground, we are happy and delighted to have always had with us speakers and participants with different political dispositions: we have Conservatives, Christian-Democrats, Liberals, Libertarians, Social-democrats and Democratic Socialists; and even on the very crucial topic of the European Union, we have Federalists and Anti-Federalists, Europhiles and Eurosceptics, "Remainers" and "Brexiters".

We have never asked for conformity of views in our previous 26 International Meetings in Political Studies and we are certainly not asking for conformity in this 27th meeting either. On the contrary, we have always encouraged critical controversy between rival views. We do believe in the old-fashioned Popperean principle that only through free controversy and free speech can we identify our mistakes and get nearer to the truth, through learning from our mistakes.

But we have always requested a gentle respect for general rules of good conduct. This is what we teach our students every single day. Precisely because we don't like to do as we are told by central powers, precisely because of this allergy to central commands, we are seriously committed to abiding by general and impersonal rules of good conduct, as opposed to arbitrary specific commands from above. We like to call these general rules, rules of gentlemanship. These are very old-fashioned rules that are far apart from the unfortunate tribal habits that now tend to dominate many universities and many television channels, including the so-called Mainstream Media, as well as the so-called social media (of the latter, as I said last year, I am glad I know nothing, only having been told about them by very kind and helpful friends).

Some people may well ask the post-modern question of 'how do you define gentlemanship?'. And, as I have said in several previous meetings in Estoril, I am glad to respond with Karl Popper's definition, which he repeatedly taught me, more

that 30 years ago: 'A gentleman is someone who does not take himself too seriously, but is prepared to take his duties very seriously, especially when most around him talk only about their rights'. In the good old days, people used to call this 'Civility'. It was of course a universal principle that applied to women as well as men — who were then called, if and only if they behaved properly, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Ladies and Gentlemen, [By the way],

I am delighted to let you know that we have made available to all participants of this Estoril Political Forum four memorable speeches which we thought might be helpful to our conversation throughout our programme.

One is the famous speech that President Ronald Reagan gave in Berlin, in 1987, when he famously said "Mr Gorbachov tear down this wall". And we are indeed celebrating today the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, which in fact happened two years after Reagan gave that speech.

We have also made available Ronald Reagan's speech of 1982 at the British House of Commons, when he famously announced his commitment to "the global campaign for democracy". That speech led to the creation of the American National Endowment for Democracy, in late 1983. We have the privilege and pleasure of having with us the Founding President of NED, our good friend Carl Gershman, who will recall that speech tomorrow, at the George Washington Memorial Dinner.

A third crucial speech we have made available is Winston Churchill's famous "Iron Curtain" speech that he delivered in 1946 at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. This was the crucial starting point for the founding of NATO in 1949, whose 70th anniversary we are also celebrating today.

A fourth speech which is available is the one given by Margaret Thatcher also at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, in 1996, fifty years after Churchill's speech in the very same place. We will have the privilege and pleasure of having the authorised biographer of Margaret Thatcher, Charles Moore, speaking this evening at the Churchill Memorial Dinner.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please allow me to conclude by recalling that we are also remembering the sad events of Tiananmen, thirty years ago. The freedom fighters of Tiananmen have just been remembered and vindicated by the 2 million demonstrators in Hong Kong — among whom, incidentally, the British flag was waved in defiance of Communist despotism.

I therefore would like to conclude by quoting a short passage from Margaret Thatcher's speech at Fulton, Missouri, in 1996:

“The West is not just some Cold War construct, devoid of significance in today’s freer, more fluid world. It rests upon distinctive values and virtues, ideas and ideals, and above all upon a common experience of liberty.

[...] It is the West that has formed that system of liberal democracy which is politically dominant and which we all know offers the best hope of global peace and prosperity. In order to uphold these things, the Atlantic political relationship must be constantly nurtured and renewed”.

Thank you.