

**Professor João Carlos Espada, OBE Ceremony, 10 May 2019**  
**Speech by HM Ambassador**

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and a very warm welcome to our Residence in Lisbon. In fact I am very relieved that it is so warm: when I looked out of the window this morning and saw the weather I was afraid that we would have to move this event indoors. But happily the sun has returned, in honour of Professor João Carlos Espada, and that is absolutely as it should be.

Ladies and gentlemen, throughout history, monarchs have rewarded those who have shown service, loyalty or gallantry with gifts and titles. After mediaeval times, physical gifts such as land or money were largely replaced by knighthoods and membership of orders of chivalry, accompanied by insignia such as gold or silver chains.

In 1917 the present Queen's grandfather, King George V, introduced a new order of chivalry, called the Order of the British Empire, to recognise those who had made an outstanding contribution to the first world war effort. Nowadays the Order of the British Empire rewards outstanding service in a wide range of areas, including honorary awards for citizens of countries where our monarch is not the head of state. And it is for this reason that we are gathered this evening, to recognise on behalf of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II the very notable contribution of our dear friend Professor João Carlos Espada to the promotion of British values. Let me explain why.

In 1988, Professor Espada was a political advisor to the then President of the Republic, Mário Soares. The President invited the elderly but very eminent Karl Popper, professor of political philosophy at the London

School of Economics, to give a lecture in Lisbon. Karl Popper was one of the most brilliant and original philosophers of the twentieth century. Born an Austrian, he had emigrated in the 1930s to escape the threat of Nazism and the Anschluss, initially to New Zealand and then following the Second World War to the United Kingdom. By the time of his visit to Lisbon in 1988, although formally retired from academic life, Popper was still a towering figure in the intellectual life of the United Kingdom. Indeed in 1988 I myself was studying philosophy at Oxford University as a humble undergraduate; and although I'm sorry to say I was not by any means a model student, I remember being profoundly impressed by the extraordinary breadth of Popper's ideas, ranging from deep political thought to brilliant insight into the nature of scientific knowledge.

Professor Espada had also studied Popper's work – in much more depth than me – and when they met in Lisbon they discussed Popper's critique of Marxism and his theory of democracy. Popper was so impressed by this young man that he invited him to England to continue the conversation. Professor Espada has written beautifully about what happened next – his visit to Popper's house in Kenley, how the conversation turned to Winston Churchill, and how through a conversation about Churchill and the defeat of tyranny in Europe, Popper came to explain the mysterious political culture of the English-speaking people in terms of their love of liberty combined with their sense of duty. Popper encouraged João Carlos to move to Britain to pursue his studies.

Professor, I know you have said that that conversation changed your life, and indeed it did because in 1990 you and your wife Graça and your two young daughters moved from Lisbon to Oxford where you spent four years studying for your Doctorate at St Anthony's College under the

supervision of the great German-British thinker Ralf Dahrendorf, who had also been a student of Popper.

And it seems to me Professor that during those years in Oxford you came to know the British almost better than we know ourselves. Our culture, our habits, our values, our beliefs, our traditions, our foibles and our politics. And of course the life and work of Sir Winston Churchill, whom you have described as perhaps the greatest twentieth-century “representative of the western tradition of liberty”.

After Oxford, Professor Espada spent some years teaching in the United States – at Brown, Stanford and Georgetown Universities. But, in the spirit of this happy occasion, I think we can overlook that minor transatlantic transgression.

Back in Portugal in 1996, Professor Espada – together with others who are here this evening – founded the Institute of Political Studies at Lisbon’s Universidade Católica – widely acknowledged as Portugal’s foremost centre for the teaching and research of political science and international relations. He remains its Director to this day. And so Professor Espada has shared with a generation of Portugal’s finest students, many of whom have gone on to occupy positions of great influence in this country, his deep understanding and appreciation of that mysterious entanglement of liberty and duty in the British-American way of life that he first discussed with Karl Popper all those years ago.

Through The Estoril Forum, the Institute’s annual cycle of conferences, Professor Espada has brought countless British academics, writers and political thinkers to Portugal in order to disseminate knowledge and

ideas about the United Kingdom; and thus in his own way has reinforced the long, historic links between our two countries. In 2015, the Estoril Political Forum adopted the theme of Magna Carta, celebrating the British concept of liberty in the charter's 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary year.

Professor Espada has published many notable papers and books. Two which feel particularly worthy of mention this afternoon are *The Anglo-American Tradition of Liberty: A view from Europe* and *The English Mystery and the Golden Chain: Essays on the Political Culture of the English-speaking peoples*, together with many papers relating to British democracy and the British political system. He has disseminated the work of many British authors in Portugal, promoting their translation, publication and study at the university.

His contribution to education has been remarkable. He has developed relations between Portuguese and British universities, particularly with Oxford, to an unprecedented level. He has nurtured precious exchange programmes for students and researchers, with some of the most prestigious UK higher education institutions, allowing many Portuguese scholars to establish lasting connections with the United Kingdom. More than thirty students have benefitted from the agreement he established between the Institute of Political Studies and St. Anthony's and Lincoln Colleges at Oxford University which has made it possible for students from the Masters and Doctoral programmes and Institute fellows to travel to the UK every year.

Professor Espada has been a driving force behind Portuguese alumni associations of British universities and an active member of and frequent

guest speaker at British associations such as the British Historical Society of Portugal. He is, very appropriately, the founder of the Portuguese branch of the International Churchill Society and is, as you would expect, an active member of the Oxford and Cambridge Society.

I should note that he has somehow also found the time to fit in a very distinguished career in the media: over the past 25 years he has established himself as one of Portugal's leading opinion formers with columns in the country's leading newspapers, contributing in no small measure to the development of pluralism and democracy, with at least occasional reference to British contemporary or historical ideas.

Ladies and gentlemen, I've managed to talk for all of this time without mentioning the European Union – quite an achievement for a British Ambassador these days – but I must also say that Professor Espada has, in my view, contributed to Portugal's understanding of our Referendum vote, setting out in his characteristically careful and sympathetic way the significance of the United Kingdom's decision to leave.

Ladies and gentlemen, please allow me to conclude that Professor João Carlos Espada, a proud Portuguese citizen, is also possibly the most British of all contemporary Portuguese academics. It feels a little presumptuous to call Professor Espada an old friend, since we have only known each other personally for a few months. But I hope nonetheless that he will permit me to describe him in that way. It is certainly true that he has been and remains the greatest of friends of the country I have the honour to represent here in Portugal. And for that we owe him a great debt of thanks; and I hope that in that context he would appreciate me recalling the words of another great political philosopher, Marcus

Tullius Cicero, who said that “*Gratitude is not just the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others.*”

Professor Espada, for a quarter of a century as an academic, writer and adviser to two Presidents, you have tirelessly promoted our shared values of democracy, political and economic liberalism, and a love of individual liberty. You have expanded Portuguese knowledge of British institutions, history and literature and strengthened links between Portuguese and British universities. You have been a tremendous advocate of the ancient as well as the modern alliance between our two countries and a wonderful example to us all of the value of friendship and understanding between nations and peoples.

It is therefore my great honour, Professor João Carlos Espada, to announce to all present that Her Majesty The Queen has appointed you to be an honorary Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. It is with great pleasure that, on Her Majesty’s behalf, I now present you with the badge of the Order. My congratulations.