

OBE Ceremony, 10 May 2019
Acceptance Speech
João Carlos Espada, OBE

**Dear Ambassador Christopher Sainty,
Senhor Professor Aníbal Cavaco Silva e Senhora Dra Maria Cavaco Silva,
Senhor Dr. José Manuel Durão Barroso,
Senhor Núncio Apostólico, D. Rino Passigato, Excelência Reverendíssima,
Senhores Vice-Reitores da Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Professores
Miguel Athaíde Marques e José Manuel Pereira de Almeida,
Senhor Professor Adriano Moreira e Dra Mónica Moreira,
Senhor Professor Manuel Braga da Cruz e Senhora Dra Rosário Braga da Cruz,
Senhor Professor Mário Pinto,
Distinguished Guests,
Dear Friends and Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

What can I say? I am speechless. I am tremendously honoured, and moved, and grateful, for this very special Award. The only words I can say, and I believe I ought to say, is **thank you**.

I must express my gratitude, in the very first place, to Her Majesty The Queen Elizabeth II. Her Majesty's full life of service and duty is an example and an inspiration to us all.

Thank you, Dear Ambassador, for your extremely kind words, and for having made possible this very special occasion at your Residence, with so many good old friends, some of whom I had not been in touch for many years. They all, with their different political dispositions, have been crucial over the last 40 years in my gradual discovery of the British mystery of Liberty under Law. I am extremely grateful for the company of all these old friends here today.

When, about a year ago, I was told by HE Kirsty Hayes, then the British Ambassador to Lisbon, that an award proposal was being submitted to HM The Queen, I was not told who had started this process and when.

I now know that the whole process goes back to 2014, five years ago, when recommendation letters were asked to my good friends Manuel Braga da Cruz, João Pereira Coutinho and, later, José Manuel Durão Barroso. I now know that Rita Seabra Brito, Ana Rita Rodrigues and Michelle Lobo have also participated in contributing with documents about my publications and activities. This process has been developed throughout several years without my knowledge, under the committed leadership of Mr. Peter Abbott, then Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy.

An old James Bond movie — and please allow me to underline *old* — an *old* James Bond movie would certainly not match this perfectly confidential process.

I have now learned that the whole process was launched in 2014 by our good friend Lord Raymond Plant — a Labour Lord, incidentally — whose work I had discussed, (and respectfully criticised), in my doctoral dissertation at Oxford, back in 1994. I have now confirmed personally with Lord Plant my suspicion that he might have started this process — which in fact he has just told me he did, at the Estoril Political Forum in 2014, in a conversation with Ambassador Kirsty Hayes.

I must also express my fundamental gratitude to my late parents and grandparents. I am sure they would have been delighted to be here with us today. They had different political dispositions. But they all shared a profound admiration for the United Kingdom, our oldest ally, and the English-speaking peoples. And I was privileged — without any merit from my side — to have been brought up in a loving family who taught me to admire the sense of Liberty and Duty that has distinguished the United Kingdom and the English-speaking peoples. Magna Carta of 1215 and the Windsor Treaty of 1386 were usual references at the dinner table with my late parents and grand-parents. Frequent guests at those dinner occasions were my parents' closest friends, Henrique and Amélia Seabra, — and I am delighted and moved that they are here with us today. I am also delighted that my sister, Conceição, and my niece, Inês, — who have also been frequent participants at those dinners — are here with us today.

A crucial word of thanks is also and decisively due to the late Sir Karl Popper. It was he who told me — back in 1987, some 32 years ago, when I was working for President Mário Soares — that I should study in Britain. It was he who told me about the British Mystery of reconciling Liberty and Duty, which he found epitomised in the 20th century by Winston Churchill. His former student, Ralf Dahrendorf, kindly accepted to be my doctoral supervisor at St. Antony's College, Oxford, of which he was then the Warden. Both the Austrian-born Sir Karl and the German-born Lord Dahrendorf gently encouraged me to study the mystery of orderly liberty in Britain and among the English-speaking peoples.

My British adventure at Oxford, as well as my next visit to Brown and Stanford Universities in America, were made possible only because my wife, Graça, and our daughters, Isabel and Diana, kindly accepted to accompany me. The family has now grown and I am delighted to have today with us Isabel and her daughters, Mariama, Yasmin and Sara, the first two having actually been born in England. I am also delighted to have with us Diana and her first baby, Tomás, who is only four-month old and the first grandson in the family.

We all share a profound admiration for the British spirit of Liberty and Duty. It has been this spirit of Liberty and Duty that has distinguished the British very special contribution to the European and Western Civilisation, of which Britain is and has always been a proud member. When resisting the Spanish Armada, Louis IV,

Napoleon, the Kaiser, Hitler and Stalin, when fighting these crucial battles, Britain and the English-speaking peoples have been reminding us all of the perennial principles of liberty and personal responsibility that have inspired our European and Western Civilisation — which is rooted in Athens, Rome and Jerusalem.

Winston Churchill recalled these principles at innumerable occasions. By a very happy coincidence, our ceremony today is taking place 79 years to the day after 10 May 1940, when Churchill became Prime Minister and then led the British and the European resistance against nazism. It is a further reason to recall briefly some of his memorable remarks about the special commitment to Liberty and Duty of the English-speaking peoples.

In a pre-war speech on 9 May 1938, eighty-one years and one day ago, Churchill said:

“Have we not an ideology — if we must use this ugly word, ideology, — have we not an ideology of our own in freedom, in a liberal constitution, in democratic and Parliamentary government, in Magna Carta and the Petition of Right?”

On 6 September 1943, when he was awarded an honorary degree at Harvard University, Churchill said about the English-speaking peoples and the special relationship between Britain and the US:

‘Law, language, literature — these are considerable factors. Common conceptions of what is right and decent, a marked regard for fair play, especially to the weak and poor, a stern sentiment of impartial justice, and above all the love of personal freedom. [...] If we are together, nothing is impossible. If we are divided all will fail. I therefore preach continually the doctrine of the fraternal association of our two peoples... for the sake of service to mankind and for the honour that comes to those who faithfully serve great causes’.

These words, I believe, have been underpinning the Atlantic Alliance, whose 70th anniversary we are celebrating this year — and we will be celebrating at the Estoril Political Forum on 24-26 June, with the presence of Randolph Churchill, the great-grandson of Winston Churchill.

I think, though, that one of the most touching expressions of the British spirit of Liberty and Duty can be found in a small episode in the crucial year of 1940. In the only letter found in the archives that Churchill’s wife, Clementine, wrote to him in that year, she was criticising him for ‘a deterioration in your manner’ in dealing with his Private Secretaries.

It is indeed quite impressive that at a tremendously dangerous period in the life of the nation, the British Prime Minister was being criticised by his wife for not being polite to his secretaries. This is almost unbelievable. But it is factually true. And it teaches

us a great lesson about the British sense of Liberty and Duty — a sense of **Civility**, to quote the great Whig historian Lord Macaulay. It is this sense of **Civility** that I believe is and has been one of the major virtues of the British political tradition of Liberty under Law — of which we are all committed admirers.

Thank you.