

Estoril Political Forum 2015
23rd International Annual Meeting in Political Studies

*800 Years After Magna Carta:
Law, Liberty and Power*

Estoril Palace Hotel, 22-24 June 2015

Opening Address
João Carlos Espada

Senhora Reitora da Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Professora Maria da Glória Garcia,

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

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

Ilustres Membros da Mesa,

Distintos Convidados, Senhoras e Senhores, Caros Amigos,

Queria começar por agradecer as amáveis palavras da Senhora Reitora da nossa Universidade Católica Portuguesa, do senhor Presidente da Câmara de Cascais e do Presidente do nosso Conselho Estratégico. A vossa presença nesta sessão de abertura é para nós um privilégio e um prazer, que muito agradecemos.

Pedia agora a vossa compreensão para prosseguir em inglês, de forma a facilitar uma conversa mais directa com os nossos inúmeros convidados estrangeiros. Como sabem, as nossas sessões serão bilingues, ou mesmo trilingues: graças à nossa equipa de tradução simultânea, a quem gostaria de saudar e agradecer, podemos usar a língua portuguesa, inglesa ou francesa em todas as sessões.

I now would like to welcome you all to the 23rd 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, more than twenty years have now passed since we had our first meeting, in the Arrabida Convent, in 1993.

Our programme’s main subject this year is the celebration of the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta, which was sealed at Runnymede, near Windsor, on the 15th of June, 1215: precisely **800 years and seven days ago**.

Another important celebration is the 200th anniversary of the battle of Waterloo, on the 18th of June 1815: precisely **200 years and 4 days ago**. This was the final defeat of Napoleon by a European coalition led by Wellington. You may recall, incidentally, that the first defeat of the then called “invincible Napoleonic troops” had occurred in Portugal, between 1808-1811, namely at the famous Linhas de Torres, also with the assistance of Wellington, at the head of an Anglo-Portuguese army.

This year of 2015 also marks the 70th anniversary of VE Day, on May 8 1945, when Hitler’s totalitarianism was defeated and Western democracies achieved a half-victory. The second half was completed only in November 1989, with the peaceful fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Soviet Iron Curtain in Central and Eastern Europe. I am delighted to recall that we have celebrated the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, together with the 40th anniversary of the Portuguese democratic revolution of April 1974, in our Estoril Political Forum of last year, 2014.

But there is a fourth anniversary being commemorated this year: the 50th anniversary of the death of Winston Churchill, on January 24, 1965. Winston Churchill has been the patron of our Estoril meetings for many years. As most of you know, we have only two rooms with names at our Institute for Political Studies in Lisbon: one is the “Prince Henry the Navigator Common Room”; the other is the “Winston Churchill Meeting Room”. In the Winston Churchill Meeting Room, incidentally, we have two pictures side by side with the picture of Churchill: one is a copy of Magna Carta — an even better copy was recently purchased by the Institute and is now on display here, during our conference. The other picture is a copy of the Windsor Treaty, signed in 1386 between Portugal and England — the oldest alliance of the Western world, we are delighted to recall.

Within this Churchillian background, therefore, it will not be a surprise that we, at the Institute for Political Studies of the Catholic University of Portugal, believe that an intellectual and cultural link can be established between the four anniversaries being commemorated at this Estoril Political Forum. We like to call it the tradition of orderly liberty under law, or the tradition of limited Government, or still the tradition of the Rule of Law and of Government accountable to Parliament. Churchill described this principle emerging from Magna Carta: “Rex non debet esse sub homine, sed sub Deo et lege — the king should not be below man, but below God and the law”.

But I would like to add immediately a qualification to this statement. Because we believe in this tradition of orderly liberty under law, precisely because of this belief, we do not expect, not to mention require, our guests in this conference to agree with us.

As it happened in previous years, we are delighted to have with us speakers and participants with different political dispositions: we have conservatives, christian-democrats, liberals, 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, including the distinguished authorised biographer of Lady Thatcher, Charles Moore, former editor of *The Telegraph* and *The Spectator* of London, the distinguished former president of the European Union, Jose Manuel Barroso, who now heads the European Studies Centre at our Institute in Lisbon, and the distinguished political philosopher Lord Raymond Plant,

from the British Labour Party — a friend of ours for many years, who gives us the privilege of sitting in our International Advisory Board.

I know this is slightly unusual in most conferences. But we are Burkeans, or, at least, I am a proud Burkean and a proud Churchillian -- and this means we like checks and balances that emerge from a clash and a conversation between different views. We certainly have our frontiers, too, but within these frontiers, we practice variety.

Our frontiers are basically the principles of liberty and personal responsibility, representative Government under the rule of law, as well as the Western alliance of free countries. And I am delighted to recall that this very hotel that is hosting us is a symbol of these ideals. It was here that the Anglo-American allies were based during WWII.

One of our intellectual heroes, Sir Isaiah Berlin, was also here during the war. And when I visited him, in 1994, at his house in Headington, at the outskirts of Oxford, he asked me where in Portugal did I live. I said in a small village called Estoril that he certainly did not know. He immediately replied "Of course I know Estoril. Is the Palace Hotel still there?" I said "of course, it is our best hotel". And then he asked: "Is the Head-Porter of the Palace Hotel still Mr. Pinto?" Then I was speechless. "How on earth do you know the name of the Head-Porter of the Palace Hotel?", I finally managed to say. And he replied in a sort of solemn manner: "Because he was a very decent chap who helped many Jews to escape to America."

This, my friends, tells you in a nutshell what our frontiers are. And, once these frontiers are clearly, I should say, very clearly marked, we practice what we preach: liberty and free competition between rival views.

This competition should be developed, as it has always been among us, under general rules of good conduct, general rules of gentlemanship. Now, if a post-modern philosopher comes to us and asks us to define "gentlemanly behaviour", my answer has been the same since Arrabida in 1993: "gentlemanly behaviour" is the one that our grand-mothers would expect us to adopt.

If, however, our post-modern philosopher insists, I am afraid I can only add one of the many and very touching lessons that Karl Popper taught me long ago:

"A gentleman is someone who does not take himself too seriously, but is prepared to take his duties very seriously, especially when most people around him talk only about their rights."

Thank you.
Enjoy our meeting.