

Constantin Ostermann von Roth  
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Your Magnificence, Vice Rector of the Catholic University  
Vice President of the "Camara Municipal de Cascais"  
Professor João Carlos Espada,  
Excellencies,  
Mr. Thomas Stehling,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Students,

Good evening!

It is with great pleasure and honour that I accepted the kind invitation to chair the dinner in memory of Konrad Adenauer – one of the great visionaries, protagonists and builders of a free and democratic post-war Europe.  
I was told that I could state some personal impressions. Please allow me, even risking to bore you, to take three minutes of your precious time:

During the past days I learned much about the fragile flower called "democracy" and began to think a bit about what I heard in this Estoril Political Forum:

1. Democracy, freedom and peace are interdependent
2. Living in a democracy is a privilege and not God-given
3. Every democrat has the responsibility to defend / fight for democracy
4. Democracy is constantly facing challenges
5. Democracy has to be conquered / reconquered by each generation
6. Democracy or better – a democratic system – is always built upon compromises

Let me say a few words on compromises and the challenges European democracy is facing. Being German born in Brazil and having lived in Portugal for many years I always thought that I would be "cosmopolitan" not having any difficulties understanding different points of view.

During the last six years, due to the financial crisis and its consequences, I realised that the way I think and approach challenges is still quite German. And I also realised how important it is to understand "the other side" in order to avoid a radicalization not only of arguments. Understanding different positions is a useful but not always easy exercise. But fortunately, the human being is a system able to evolve. Meanwhile, talking to friends in Germany, I find myself defending the Portuguese point of view whereas in Portugal I try to explain the German perspective.

I came to the conclusion that we can only really benefit from a European Community if we have a strong European identity and institutions. The precondition for further vital European integration is – and that is my point of view – the ability to reach compromises which base on mutual understanding of the different European peoples, their dreams, anxieties and requirements. This is no easy undertaking, but we Europeans are lucky to have something in common that might be of great help when it comes to mutual understanding: our culture based on Christianity.

Now I look around and see so many young and politically interested students from different countries exchanging opinions, vividly discussing democracy and the challenges it is facing. It leaves me optimistic, and I am sure that with your help we will

have a chance for an even better mutual understanding and consequently a democratic future in a unified, peaceful Europe.

Personal encounters are essential for mutual understanding. The visit of the president of the Federal Republic of Germany, Joachim Gluck, to Portugal is one symbol of the importance of personal contacts. The Konrad Adenauer Foundation, as well as the foundations of other political parties in Germany, has helped to develop democratic political parties in different countries. Nowadays these foundations are still present in various countries with consolidated democracies – one of the reasons certainly is to promote and encourage mutual understanding and to fortify the process of European integration.

Therefore I am pleased to present to you our guest of honour and speaker of the Konrad Adenauer Memorial Dinner.

As I am sure that most of you already know Thomas Stehling well, as he is a habitu  of the "Estoril Political Forum" (he participated actively for many years) my presentation of his curriculum vitae and vast professional career will be brief:

- \* Thomas Stehling is Director of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Madrid office, responsible for Spain and Portugal since 2009
- \* He read Law and Political Science at Christian Albrecht-University, Kiel from 1972-79, where he was personal assistant to Prof. Dr. Karl Carstens, Member of Parliament, (Leader of the Opposition, President of Parliament and President of the Federal Republic of Germany)
- \* He was amongst other things, elected to
  - Deputy Director-General Norddeutscher Rundfunk (1990)
  - Chairman of the ARD Foreign Committee
  - Chairman of the DEGETO *general meeting of the partners*
  - Chairman of the Board of Directors, Studio Hamburg GmbH
  - Chairman of the *general meeting of the partners* of "Medienstiftung Hamburg"
  - Member of the Advisory Board, Polyphon
- \* From 1996 onwards he was Head of Media Projects of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Asia (responsible for the ASEAN countries as well as China and Hong Kong)
- \* And from 2001 to 2009 he was Director of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation, London Office (for Great Britain, Ireland, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden).
- \* He is married to Kristina Stehling and has 3 children

I won't detain you any longer as I am sure that we are all eager to listen to Mr. Thomas Stehling.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr. Stehling – you have the floor!