
Freedom not Socialism

A call addressed to socialists in all parties

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*"Nearly forty years have gone by since a socialism,
that had added the decorative little word 'national' in front of it
had ... disrupted free movement in Europe."¹
(Friedrich August von Hayek, Nobel Prize Winner, 1974)*

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¹ Friedrich August von Hayek: Wissenschaft und Sozialismus (Science and Socialism), Walter Eucken Institute, Lectures and essays , No. 71, Tübingen. 1979, p. 3.

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I. Scene-setting

A political stock-taking speech that I delivered on the occasion of the Twelfth Albigütli Convention on 21 January 2000 and that was subsequently distributed to all homes in Switzerland, contained the following passage: **“it is the Social Democrats who have the biggest credibility gap at present”**. The socialism that had been so highly praised by our critics for so long underwent a complete economic, political and moral collapse in 1989. Today, the socialists are trying to distract attention from their own shipwreck by brandishing accusations of fascism. Have the social democrats forgotten that between 1993 and 1945 Switzerland defended **sovereignty, neutrality, direct democracy and federalism** against the Brown tidal wave? In those days, the Swiss People’s Party (SVP/PPS) stood in the front ranks and it is continuing the fight today like no other party. Now it is precisely the Left, which despises such values today, that is accusing the Swiss People’s Party of harbouring extremist ideologies. **Our opponents are setting out to gloss over the fact that there is not the slightest difference between the Brown and the Red mass-murders of the twentieth century**. Those socialists who are spreading their accusations of fascism so frivolously today ought actually to realise that it is they, with their glorification of the all-embracing state, their never-ending emphasis on the collective and their disregard for individual freedom, who are very much nearer to the fascist view of the world than we are. It was no matter of chance that the Brown mobs espoused the name “national **socialists**” (...)²

What had directly prompted me to make that remark in January had been the attempts of the political, cultural and social Left over a period of months to push the democratic centre parties – and especially the Swiss People’s Party – into a **corner of extreme rightist totalitarianism and to isolate them there**. This systematic defamation occurred not only in Switzerland itself, in advertisements and public declarations, but also in the Council of Europe in Strasbourg³, with the involvement of Victoy Ruffy, a member of the Swiss Social Democratic Party and a former member of the National Council (one of the chambers of the Swiss federal parliament). **The process had the effect of slurring, smearing and insulting the innumerable supporters of the Swiss political party that commands the largest number of votes**.

My carefully considered statement, which spelt things out precisely as they are, has had the welcome effect of starting up a full-scale debate. The Social Democratic Party, however, has reacted with ultimatums, demands for apologies and the announcement of its intention to boycott the talks between the parties who have members in the Swiss federal government (Federal Council).⁴ The Social Democratic Party’s objective is clear: **to use threats to try and prevent a factual discussion and a frank intellectual analysis and to suppress any counter arguments right from the very beginning. A key debate on “fundamental values” and socialism should not be permitted to take place in public**. The president of the Social Democratic Party wrote the following to the national president of the Swiss People’s Party “as you have presumably gathered from the press, Dr. Blocher is moving the Swiss People’s Party into close proximity with the national-socialist movement.” That is an absurd insinuation, intended to try and get the Social Democratic Party off the hook of having to express a view on the specific charges: i.e. the fact that overemphasising the omnipotence of the state and belittling the individual forms the roots for subsequent atrocities committed in their names under both socialism and national socialism. Of course, I have never made the nonsensical assertion that the Swiss social democrats are actually national social-

² Christoph Blocher: Die sieben Geheimnisse der SVP (The Seven Secrets of the SVP); political stock-taking on the occasion of the twelfth Albigütli Convention, 21 January 2000, Zurich 2000, page 7 ff.

³ Menace des partis et mouvements extrémistes pour la démocratie en Europe, Council of Europe, Strasbourg 2000

⁴ Ursula Koch, President of the SPS, to Ueli Maurer, President of the SVP of Switzerland, 7 March 2000.

ists or fascists. That would amount to a gross playing down of political mass-murderers. Nor for one moment have I ever cast doubt on the fact that numerous representatives of social democracy also fought with bravery and the courage of their convictions in the fight against Nazi terror and that they suffered, and even died, under it – just like Liberals, practising Christians, members of the nobility and officers involved in the Resistance. Now, let me launch a straight challenge to those socialists (not only in the ranks of the social democrats!) who are now linking us to totalitarian ideology to think seriously about the common roots of the ideology of national socialism, fascism and socialism. **These common intellectual roots are the causes of totalitarianism and they reside in the aim of wanting the state to have powers as far-reaching as possible in every facet of life (etatism), the overemphasis of the community (collectivism) and the disrespect for the freedom of individuals (anti-individualism, anti-liberalism).**

II. An end to totalitarianism in the twenty-first century

In 1945, national socialism collapsed in Germany. Millions lay dead in the rubble of that totalitarian system – the victims of unimaginable racial hatred, the victims of the Brown holocaust. Between 1989 and 1991, the socialist dictatorships of eastern Europe fell apart. Millions lay dead in the rubble – the victims of unimaginable class hatred, the victims of the Red holocaust. Whereas Brown totalitarianism has now been, fortunately, totally discredited, put to shame and outlawed, Red totalitarianism still repeatedly has its champions, or at least its apologists, in the ranks of the Left– amongst socialists and social democrats. By way of contrast to the atrocities of the national socialists, the public at large has still been far too little informed about the socialist mass-murders, the decimation of whole ethnic groups (such as the Cossacks and the Ukrainians) through deliberate stage-managed famines, the destruction of the “class enemy” in the farming community (kulaks) as well as “counterrevolutionaries”, deportations, forced labour, the liability imposed on families for the alleged crimes or actions of their members and the terror of the socialist gulags in labour and concentration camps.⁵ Researchers who can be taken seriously estimate that communism cost nearly a hundred million lives.⁶

Lenin and his comrades and successors saw themselves as the executors of a merciless class struggle in which political and ideological opponents – and even whole sections of the population that proved stubborn – were ruthlessly exterminated. Only those who equate the term “left” with “good” will muster all the forces available to them to oppose the comparison between Red and Brown. Focusing attention on the common causes of the terrorism wrought by both totalitarian systems evidently impinges upon the very foundations of the Left’s self-perception and casts light on a dogmatism that is cause for concern both morally and intellectually. **The reason why, in my following remarks, I do not focus primarily on the distinctions between the two major totalitarian ideologies is that it is what the two systems have in common that forms the cause of totalitarianism.** It is high time to take cognisance of the dangerous nature of socialism once again. **What we as free people in a democratic community based on market economy must do on the threshold of the twenty-first century is to liberate ourselves from socialism with its contempt of humanity.** Given the insidious spread of socialism, this represents an urgent call addressed to socialists in all parties.

What might appear on the surface to be party-political mudslinging between the Swiss People’s Party and the Social Democratic Party is in reality an important clarification of fundamental political and social positions – a veritable “debate regarding underlying values”. At the same time, this call is a warning against being led astray up the blind alley of socialism, with its devastating effects for humanity. The warning has to be worded so clearly and in terms that some might regard as harsh, because the seriousness of the issue requires it. It is not an attack on socialists as people, but on the socialist system and socialist ideology. What is at stake is to prevail over the socialism that is still favoured and admired amongst political thinkers and to fight against it as a dangerous, totalitarian and obsolete ideology. It is precisely for that reason that this call is also addressed to members of the democ-

⁵ Rudolph Chimelli: Matrioschka, published by the Familien Vontobel Foundation, Zurich 1991. Robert Conquest: Der grosse Terror, Munich 1992. Stéfane Courtois et al.: Das Schwarzbuch des Kommunismus. Unterdrückung, Verbrechen und Terror. With the Chapter "Die Aufarbeitung des Sozialismus in der DDR" by Joachim Gauck and Ehrhart Neubert, 3rd Edition, Munich 1999. Paul Rothenhäusler and Hans-Ueli Sonderegger: Erinnerung an den Roten Holocaust. Der Jahrhundertverrat der Intellektuellen, Stäfa 1999.

⁶ Stéfane Courtois (Das Schwarzbuch des Kommunismus, 3rd Edition, Munich 1999, p. 16) gives the following order of magnitude for the victims of communism: Soviet Union 20 million dead, China 65 million dead, Vietnam 1 million dead, North Korea 2 million dead, Cambodia 2 million dead, Eastern Europe 1 million dead, Latin America 150,000 dead, Africa 1.7 million dead, Afghanistan 1.5 million dead, Communist International and communist parties not in power, approximately 10,000 dead.

atic centre in politics who play down socialism. **Despite all the evident negative consequences in the course of the past twenty years, our country has moved further and further away from the path of freedom and is embarked on an increasingly socialist course.**

III. Two roads to serfdom

When all is said and done, the contradiction between a libertarian order and a totalitarian one is irreconcilable. It is plain to see that socialist and communist politics has the same intellectual basis as national-socialist or fascist politics. **The major thinkers of the twentieth century detected the commonalities of the two horrendous totalitarian systems a long time ago and furnished scientifically convincing evidence.** Ludwig von Mises, an authoritative early thinker of the liberal society and one of the most significant economists of his century, wrote the following as early as 1932: **“Both Marxism and national socialism agree with each other in their opposition to liberalism and their rejection of the capitalist order of society. Both are aiming for a socialistic order of society.”**⁷ Writing in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* in 1937, Wilhelm Röpke remarked that **“The antifascism of the communists and the anti-communism of the fascists is basically a family squabble within the totalitarian sector of the world.”**⁸ Nearly fifty years ago, Friedrich August von Hayek, the economist and Nobel prize-winner published his work *The Road to Serfdom*, which settled the scores with the “rightist” and “leftist” dictatorships in an extremely thorough manner.⁹ Hayek showed that it is only a liberal order that can lead to a society of free and prosperous people. At almost exactly the same time, the philosopher, Sir Karl R. Popper unmasked both national socialists and socialists as enemies of the “open society”.¹⁰ In the Swiss satirical magazine *Nebelspalter*, Carl Böcki unerringly drew attention to the common denominators of the “red fists” and the “brown fists” and the fact that both ideologies justify and accept coercion and violence with a view to attaining allegedly “higher purposes”. The sociologist and political scientist, Hannah Arendt, summed up the common ideological foundation of national socialism and socialism very appositely with the term “totalitarianism”.¹¹ In two seminal works that were published in 1968 and 1986, the British historian, Robert Conquest, dealt with the criminal misdeeds of Stalinism.¹² In 1982, the German historian, Karl Dietrich Bracher, described the common feature of the two major tempting movements of the twentieth century.¹³ The French intellectual, André Glucksmann meted out sharp criticism of the elements that all totalitarian systems have in common, whatever their political colour.¹⁴ In France, the inherent relationship between Red and Brown totalitarianism and the way they aided and abetted each other was researched in an exemplary manner and committed to print by François Furet in *The End of an Illusion*¹⁵, which appeared in 1995, and by Stéphane Courtois in a *Black Book of Communism*, which was published in 1997.¹⁶ Within recent weeks, another book has been published in Paris: *The Big Parade – an essay on the persistence of the Socialist Utopia*. In it, the philosopher, Jean-François Revel sheds light on the reasons for the incensed socialist reactions to *Black Book of Communism*: **“It is not pleasant to have to admit to having**

⁷ Ludwig von Mises: *Die Gemeinwirtschaft*, Jena 1932, Neudruck München 1981, p. 462.

⁸ Wilhelm Röpke: “Sozialismus und politische Diktatur”, in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 18/19 January 1937.

⁹ Friedrich August von Hayek: *Der Weg zur Knechtschaft*, published and with an introduction by Wilhelm Röpke, translated by Eva Röpke, Erlenbach 1943. See also Friedrich August von Hayek: *Die verhängnisvolle Anmassung. Die Irrtümer des Sozialismus*, Tübingen 1996.

¹⁰ Karl R. Popper: *Die offene Gesellschaft und ihre Feinde*, Christchurch 1944.

¹¹ Hannah Arendt: *Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft*, Frankfurt am Main 1955.

¹² Robert Conquest: *The Great Terror. Stalin's purge of the Thirties*, London 1968. Robert Conquest: *The harvest of sorrow. Soviet collectivization and the terror-famine*, New York 1986. See also Robert Conquest: *Reflections on a ravaged century*, New York 2000.

¹³ Karl Dietrich Bracher: *Zeit der Ideologien. Eine Geschichte politischen Denkens im 20. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart 1982.

¹⁴ André Glucksmann: *Am Ende des Tunnels. Das falsche Denken ging dem katastrophalen Handeln voraus. Eine Bilanz des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 1991.

¹⁵ François Furet: *Le passé d'une illusion. Essai sur l'idée communiste au XXe siècle*, Paris 1995. François Furet: *Das Ende einer Illusion. Der Kommunismus im 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich 1996.

¹⁶ Stéphane Courtois et al.: *Le livre noir du communisme. Crimes, terreurs et répression*, Paris 1997. Stéphane Courtois et al.: *Das Schwarzbuch des Kommunismus. Unterdrückung, Verbrechen und Terror*. With the chapter “Die Aufarbeitung des Sozialismus in der DDR” by Joachim Gauck and Ehrhart Neubert, 3rd Edition, Munich 1999.

spent nearly a century supporting a type of political regime that is basically identical to the one that has been fought against as Evil incarnate (nazism). The pain of making such a confession is feared by the whole Left.”¹⁷

The root causes of the two totalitarian systems are the same: the belief in the all-powerful state and contempt for the individual. What they need is an ideology to encompass all facets of life, a single mass party, a system of terror, a monopoly of the means of mass communication and a comprehensive “anti-capitalism”, i.e. advocacy of as central a command of the economy as possible and the dependence of the individual on the state that goes with it. Both ideologies are in favour of the omnipresence and omnipotence of the state, which knows everything, steers everything, destroys everything and represses everything that is outside of its set of norms. Anyone who has failed to recognise these true causes of both the human catastrophes of the twentieth century is not immune to future disasters and threats of a similar kind. There are differences in political language and political style. Under national socialism and fascism, brutality and disdain for human beings are concealed behind terms that sound nice and ethical such as “national community”, “homeland” or “well-being of the community rather than well-being of the individual”. Socialism also operates slogans which sound no less positive and are all the more dangerous because their true depths have still not been investigated; examples are “solidarity” “peace”, “social justice” and “people’s democracy”. Socialism and communism are perhaps even more perfidious as a “sweet poison” and it is more difficult to fight against them. **National socialism and fascism were defeated by force of arms and then outlawed. All that socialism went through, however, was economic and intellectual bankruptcy and it is capable of a resurrection anywhere and at anytime.**

By stark contrast to both Brown and Red totalitarianism, what we want is freedom instead of oppression, democracy instead of dictatorship, market economy instead of planned economy, multiparty competition instead of a single-party system, the rule of law instead of terror, freedom of thought instead of censorship. There is only one freedom and it is founded on the value of the individual uniqueness of every single human being and on the multiplicity of perspectives (pluralism).

¹⁷ Jean-François Revel: La grande parade. Essai sur la survie de l'utopie socialiste, Paris 2000. See on this Stefan Brändle: Es gibt nicht "gute" oder "schlechte" Henker, in: Aargauer Zeitung, 25 March 2000 (Weekend Supplement).

IV. Where does socialism stand today?

In Switzerland, the largest number of socialists is to be found in the Social Democratic Party (SPS); it is clearly the party that is nearest to socialist ideology. **Contrary to what it used to do in early years, the Swiss Social Democratic Party has recently been making less and less of a distinction between social democracy and socialism.** Whereas social democracy has clearly stated that it has no ties with totalitarianism and is presenting its political targets openly to the electorate in the democratic context of competition between the parties, the very ideology of socialism contradicts the principles of democracy and market economy. **Contrary to the Social democrats in The United Kingdom or Germany, for instance, the Swiss Social Democratic Party, unfortunately, has still not yet seen the need to draw a clear demarcation line between itself and socialism and to set out on a new, more modern course.** Delegates at Social Democratic Party congresses still sing the same “*Internationale*” that was also compulsory singing under the socialist dictatorships. The present-day head of the social democratic group in the Swiss federal parliament, Francesco Cavalli, is regarded as a “Marxist theoretician of stature”¹⁸, and as such is a man professing an ideology, whose implementation in practice has caused terror, warfare, famine and endless suffering for humanity. A fellow member of the Social Democratic Party from Geneva calls him a “man of the Communist International 1920 style”,¹⁹ in other words, a supporter of the Third Communist International true to the Moscow line. The unimaginable criminal energy that was let loose by that organisation is spelt out in the chapter on “Comintern in action” in the “Black Book of Communism”.²⁰

In this way, leading Swiss politicians belonging to the Social Democratic Party are distancing themselves from the reformist-democratic perception of social democrats and are again, in part, espousing the totalitarian direction of socialism. They are proud to admit to being friends of past or present totalitarian regimes in Cuba, North Korea, Cambodia or Nicaragua. Some of them sing the praises of “impoverished” blood-stained, socialist dictatorships in the Third World, whilst demonising the “rich” western democracies.²¹ The Marxist-Leninist “POCH” (“Progressive Organisations of Switzerland”) has now been almost completely assimilated in the Swiss Social Democratic Party. The Zurich May Day Committee, on which the Social Democratic Party is also represented, was responsible for the scandalous invitation issued to Sahra Wagenknecht from eastern Germany, a stauncher defender of Stalin, to attend the May Day Celebrations in 2000 – an action which did not lead to any major criticism in the media.²² **What, I wonder, is the difference between playing down or denying Red mass-murders and denying the Brown mass-murders?**

The Social Democratic Party programme that was adopted in 1982 and that is still valid today, contains the following passage (and I quote): “**These principles are directed towards the long-term objective of a society living in freedom marked by solidarity. They include the defeat of capitalism [...].**”²³ It is a sign of pretty far-fetched intellectual dishonesty for the Swiss Social Democrats to set out to fight “capitalism” and thus private property and the free market whilst at the same time demanding freedom. In those days, just before the Swiss Social Democratic Party’s programme congress in Lugano, that represented a

¹⁸ Jean Ziegler: Vier so gescheite Leute, gänzlich zerstritten, in: Die Weltwoche No. 8, 24. Februar 2000, p. 17.

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ Stéfane Courtois, Jean-Louis Panné: Die Komintern in Aktion, in: Das Schwarzbuch des Kommunismus, 3rd Edition, Munich 1999, pp. 299-365.

²¹ Beat Kappeler: Moral statt Fakten, in: Die Weltwoche No. 45, 5. November 1998.

²² Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 8. March 2000.

²³ Parteiprogramm der Sozialdemokratischen Partei der Schweiz, verabschiedet am Parteitag in Lugano, 1982, in: Schweizerische Parteiprogramme, Bern 1983, pp. 125 f.

milestone in its history, its president, Helmut Hubacher, was proud to declare in the communist newspaper *“Vorwärts”* that: **“the break with capitalism will be the central theme of our debates.”**²⁴ Even if more recent Social Democratic Party documents on economic matters no longer speak of the defeat of capitalism, the programme adopted by the party, which is a member of the Swiss coalition government, has never been repealed, despite the complete bankruptcy of the “anti-capitalist” states. **I find this most worrying, since without private property and a free market – as has long since been proven both in theory and practice – there can be neither freedom, nor prosperity nor social security for the people. It is the bankrupt socialist states themselves that have played by no means the smallest role in demonstrating this before the eyes of the whole world, once and for all.**

²⁴ Vorwärts, Organ der Partei der Arbeit (PdA), 11 November 1982.

V. The Left wielding the cudgel of fascist accusations

The Social Democratic Party reacts with extreme sensitivity to any criticism levelled against it and tries to counter the factual arguments with insults and threats against the Swiss People's Party and its public representatives. The fact is that, **when organisations in other countries and, in part, even US government agencies launched a revolting witch-hunt against the lifetime achievements of the whole Swiss generation that had seen active service, with a distorted representation of history, the Swiss People's Party took a decisive stance against it.**²⁵ We have never tried to portray ourselves as lily-white moralists, we have never maintained that no mistake was made amongst the ranks of the democratic centre throughout the period 1933–1945.²⁶ We have never denied that, at the time, appeasement, pussyfooting and occasionally even sympathy towards totalitarian systems was present in leading political, economic and social circles – probably even considerably more so than amongst the Swiss people as a whole. **That those on the Left were apparently so immune to the ill-fated causes of national socialism – “anti-capitalism” and the revolutionary, anti-democratic way of thinking – as they now claim today is a historical myth carefully nourished by them.** The claim made by many socialists that they alone own a sort of monopoly on democracy, humanity and what is right was long ago given the lie by history. When Swiss social democrats and socialists today claim that they were the ones to stand up most decisively against fascism and national socialism then they must expect to have to deal with the question as to how they would have fought against these forms of totalitarianism. Up until well into the 1930s, the Swiss Social Democratic Party turned down the army as such, as well as all the efforts of Rudolf Minger, the federal councillor (cabinet minister) from the Swiss People's Party, to ensure modernisation of its armaments – despite the fact that in those days virtually the only role the army had was to put up a defence against national socialism and fascism.

In the final analysis, it was the fraternisation between national socialism and socialism in the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939 that facilitated the outbreak of the second world war. The extent to which the freedom-hating dictatorships of communism and national socialism or fascism reached out their hands to each other is seen in Hitler's remark that he had **started out as a “simple worker” and was a socialist.**²⁷ By no means the least argument Hitler used to justify persecution of the Jews was that he branded them as the alleged representatives of “evil capitalism”. He did that in order to justify himself in accordance with “socialist” criteria. When Mussolini was expelled from the socialist party, he ranted that it was not possible to get rid of him, **because he was a socialist and would always remain one.**²⁸ From the very beginning, national socialism and fascism laid claim to the role of an accentuated “anti-capitalistic”, “social” workers' movement. In his economic and sociological analysis of socialism, Ludwig von Mises wrote: **“there were no better disciples of Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin than the Nazis.”**²⁹ The economist and sociologist, Wilhelm Röpke, who was expelled by the Nazis in 1933, once wrote that it had been the form of social democracy with its idea of the well-organised welfare and police state, with its tight organisation, that was particularly appropriate for the German character “from which national socialism then adopted essential traits”.³⁰ **The fact that each of these political groupings persecuted and fought the**

²⁵ Christoph Blocher: Die Schweiz und der Zweite Weltkrieg. Eine Klarstellung, Zurich 1997. Christoph Blocher: Die Schweiz und der Eisenstat-Bericht, Zurich 1997.

²⁶ Christoph Blocher: Von Selbstgerechten, Heuchlern und anderen Moralisten, in: Die Schweiz und der Zweite Weltkrieg. Eine Klarstellung, Zurich 1997, pp. 13-15.

²⁷ Eduard Stäubli: "... so dass keiner mehr die Sprache des andern versteht." Politik mit verfälschten Begriffen, in: Medien-Panoptikum, April 1997, p. 26.

²⁸ ibid.

²⁹ Ludwig von Mises: Sozialismus, an Economic and Sociological Analysis, translated by J. Kahane, Indianapolis 1981, p. 530.

³⁰ Wilhelm Röpke: Die deutsche Frage, 3rd Edition, Erlenbach 1948, p. 146.

other does not stop their intellectual roots from being identical. Hitler entered into an alliance with Stalin only to fall out with him again. The Stalinists persecuted the Trotskyites and the national socialists did the same with members of the SA, accused of being deviationists within their own party organisation.

Right up until 1989, the year of the demise of the socialist dictatorships, the Swiss Social Democratic Party maintained friendly relations with the totalitarian regimes of eastern Europe. In order to attract attention away from the blood-bespattered history of socialism and communism, numerous leftist politicians, intellectuals and media figures start wielding the club of fascist allegations against others in a highly dubious manner: **right from the start, anti-fascism was leveraged by the socialist regimes as a myth, a weapon and a legitimisation. They make the assertion that their liberal and conservative opponents of the democratic centre form a single community with fascism.** The rulers of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) erased the word “national socialism” from their vocabulary, because they were irritated by the word “socialism” it contained and the term of abuse they applied for nearly all the opponents of their system was “fascists”. In doing so, they were trying to make a higher moral claim for their regime that was no less totalitarian. The rejection of democracy under the cloak of “anti-fascism” enticed totalitarian socialists to open terrorism and political murder, which happened in the 1970s in the shape of the “Red Army Fraction” in Germany and the “Red Brigades” in Italy. Despite all of this, many people are still acting as if there had only ever been one form of totalitarian rule in the twentieth century. The Brown totalitarianism that was vanquished long ago and the Red version, that has still not been conquered are measured up with extremely different yardsticks. As Wilhelm Röpke put it: it is as if we were to cook a pancake on one side only; that is what makes it burn and gives it such an awful smell.³¹

³¹ Wilhelm Röpke: Briefe (1934-1966), published by Eva Röpke, Erlenbach 1976, p. 24.

VI. The Social Democratic Party's infatuation with fascism and national socialism

Despite having to contend with economic difficulties and political threats, Switzerland can look back on an extremely successful twentieth century, perhaps the most successful century that any country has ever lived through in the whole history of humanity! By no means the least reason for that is that our country held high the little lamp of freedom and warded off the temptations and violent threats from both the Browns and the Reds. The history of Switzerland throughout the past hundred years has been marked by a unique growth in affluence and prosperity. **Despite that, we were recently treated to the sorry spectacle of our country and its citizens facing unparalleled incriminations of a masochistic, self-destructive kind on account of recent history.** In the process, Swiss leftists portrayed themselves as particularly virtuous, untarnished moralists and analysts of political history. Of course, it was an easy task for them to show that some leading figures from the democratic centre had adopted a vacillating, cowardly attitude towards the dictatorships in our neighbouring countries before and during the second world war. However, they did all they possibly could to sidestep the question as to whether all social-democratic spokespersons and publicists had always stood up as courageous resistance fighters and steadfast democrats. Many of the things they said and wrote tend to prove the contrary. That still applies as far as the dangerous 1940s are concerned, when it was clear that fascism and national socialism posed a threat to the very existence of Switzerland – which had not yet been the case in the 1930s. The fact that Hitler and Mussolini also fought against socialists and social democrats does not mean that key voices in the Swiss Social Democratic Party did not contemplate the ideological foundations of those dictatorships with a certain comprehension or even admiration. **The root causes of servitude, persecution and terror – namely the omnipotent state, collectivism and anti-capitalism – most definitely stimulated feelings of fascination in the Swiss Social Democratic Party.**

A clear disdain for democracy and thus an unconcealed totalitarian attitude emerge quite clearly in the following lines taken from the "*Berner Tagwacht*" (the official Swiss Social Democratic Party's mouth-piece): **"We do have some sort of inkling of the geographic upheavals going on, but little notion of the political ones or the incipient intellectual ones. It seems to have gone almost unnoticed that Mussolini linked his declaration of war with the appeal to 'proletarian Italy'. Against the obsolete, sclerotic 'plutocratic' democracies..."**³² Also writing in the "*Berner Tagwacht*", Ernst Reinhard, a social-democratic member of the National Council (one of the two houses of the Swiss federal parliament) sung the praises of fascist Italy as **"a young, upcoming and unbelievably competent nation"**, that must also be granted the right **"to create its own system of government, in precisely the same way as Russia has done and as we claim to do for ourselves"**. The article went on to say that Italy had become **"a good, sincere friend of Switzerland on account of its own enlightened interest"**. According to the peculiar league table of peoples published in the Social Democratic Party organ, Italy as **"a young, upcoming and unbelievably competent nation"** was treated to one of the top positions: **"With a sound knowledge of the circumstances, we regard the Italian people as one of the most valuable peoples on Earth. [...] It would have been a command of wisdom not to have closed our minds to Italy's fair and vital demands."**³³ As late as 26 August 1943 (!), the official Social Democratic Party organ published an article in honour of the Duce's birthday. It spoke about **"Mussolini's great gift, which led him to proud heights over wide areas [...]. Whatever the final end may be, he has merited a place in world history and the final judgement will endorse his personal integrity, drive and eminent skills. A**

³² Berner Tagwacht, offizielles Publikationsorgan der SPS, No. 138, 15 June 1940 (Supplement).

³³ "Das italienische Problem", in: Berner Tagwacht, offizielles Organ der SPS, No. 115, 20 Mai 1940, p. 1.

political genius with really dynamic power.³⁴ The evident sympathy with which the official organ of the Swiss Social Democratic Party appraised the European dictatorships, the extent to which they worshiped collectivism and the extent to which they propagated Swiss appeasement is evidenced in the following alarming statement: **“Today, the working people of Switzerland are rapidly gaining a greater appreciation for the example set by the authoritarian states in subordinating the economy and wealth, knowledge and skills to the national community as a whole [...]. That would be a change in direction we could all benefit from treating ourselves to and with which we would also be able to survive in the New Europe.”**³⁵

It was not just fascist Italy but also national-socialist Germany that received a pat on the back from the Swiss social democrats on account of its anti-capitalist leanings. In summer 1940, the *“Berner Tagwacht”* wrote the following regarding the Nazi state: **“it is not a communist state, nor is it a socialist state, but it is winning under the motto of national socialism [...]. In every corner we see a new world dawning. Where it is not being brought about by war or revolution, capitalist society is being forced to make corrections itself – to regulate its torrents and stagnant ponds.”**³⁶ A lead article entitled “The German economic system” graced the pages of the official social democratic mouthpiece with the following avowal: **“the new economic order which is in the process of being established here will only be able to achieve its full significance once the war is over. It is displacing the old order, which emerged during the last century and which has been recognised as obsolete not only in Germany.”** Money would only determine purchasing power **“within the limits of the quantity of merchandise conceded to money owners by the state”**. **“In this way,”** the social democratic journal rejoiced, **“the concept of ‘ownership’” had also been redefined in national-socialist Germany”**.³⁷ The *“Berner Tagwacht”* showed striking ideological bonds when it praised the Third Reich: **“In replacing the old economic order with intentional state control, an essential change is taking place in the fundamental perceptions of economic policy. [...] A country with little capital, such as Germany is now no longer dependent on having to run abroad to borrow capital. It is now possible to bring German workers and Germany’s natural resources together without having to seek the blessing of the English banker. What that means, however, is breaking the bias in favour of capital. Germany’s gift to the whole world has been not only liberation from the servitude of interest payments but liberation from the bondage of capital as a whole. Of course, the German technique of replacing capital with extended internal credit is a veritable art, whose secrets have not yet become fully known in other countries.”**³⁸

On 4 January 1941, the *“Berner Tagwacht”* finally acclaimed the revolutionary character of the totalitarian regimes in Germany and Italy: **“the 1918 Revolution [in Switzerland] came to a standstill and was repelled. In a different sense, fascism and national socialism have started things moving again. Both movements are growing beyond their original purposes; in fact, they have already outgrown them. They once appeared reactionary, but today they are the mainstays of the revolutions. It is an irrefutable truth, as socialism has always said, that the social idea will never die and nor will the working class as a mass revolutionary factor.”**³⁹ Any reference to such highly dubious passages in the party’s official press today meets with an almost fanatical objection from the social democrats, such as

³⁴ Berner Tagwacht, offizielles Publikationsorgan der SPS, No. 171, 26 July 1943, p. 2.

³⁵ Berner Tagwacht, offizielles Publikationsorgan der SPS, No. 216, 14 September 1940.

³⁶ "Die Welt im Umbruch", in: Berner Tagwacht, offizielles Publikationsorgan der SPS, No. 141, 19 June 1940, p. 1.

³⁷ "Das deutsche Wirtschaftssystem", in: Berner Tagwacht, offizielles Publikationsorgan der SPS, No. 164, 16 July 1940, p. 1.

³⁸ "Die Kapitallegende", in: Berner Tagwacht, offizielles Publikationsorgan der SPS, No. 166, 18 July 1940, p. 1.

³⁹ Berner Tagwacht, offizielles Publikationsorgan der SPS, No. 2, 4 January 1941.

was witnessed by their sharp reactions to the speech I delivered to the Albigüetli Convention at the start of this year. When are the Swiss social democrats finally going to get round to digesting their own history?

VII. The Social Democratic Party's closeness to socialist dictatorships

With the increasing military successes of the Allies starting in 1942, the sympathy of Swiss leftists for Stalin's regime grew. At the end of 1944, communists and left-wing social democrats set up the 'Party of Labour' and hoped that a new opportunity for socialism would come with the advance of the Red Army. However, the climate of the cold war and the violent repression of the popular uprisings in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Hungary and Czechoslovakia in the post-war period led the social democrats to distance themselves considerably from the socialist dictatorships. That changed in part in the aftermath of the student disturbances of 1968, with emphasis now being placed on "anti-capitalism", "anti-imperialism" and the "peace movement", that was directed particularly against the USA and Israel. **Throughout the 1980s, the Swiss Social Democratic Party maintained keen and amicable contacts with totalitarian states in the eastern block, even if these were handled discreetly as far as the public was concerned. It denied the totalitarian nature of communist ideology, wishing to be able to provide the socialist states with active assistance.**

Between 30 June and 4 July 1982, a six-member-strong delegation from the Swiss Social Democratic Party was in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) at the invitation of the Socialist Unity Party ('SED'). **The violent communist regime that was in power there at the time used to throw its political opponents into jail and had ordered its border guards to shoot to kill anyone who tried to "flee the Republic".** The chairman of the Council of State, Erich Honecker, received the Swiss visitors at a meeting, at which the president of the Swiss Social Democratic Party, Helmut Hubacher, began by proudly declaring that Lenin had been a member of the party in Switzerland and that his membership card was on display in the *Landesmuseum* in Zurich. After four hours of talks, the two sides agreed to publish a joint communiqué. According to the SED organ "*Neues Deutschland*", **"Erich Honecker and Helmut Hubacher expressed their serious concern about the dangerous escalation of the international situation brought about by aggressive imperialist circles"**.⁴⁰ In an oral statement, Hubacher condemned Israel's war in the Lebanon. Acting under Honecker's instructions, Hermann Axen, a member of the politburo, had "confidential discussions" with Hubacher regarding credit restrictions imposed by the major Swiss banks vis-à-vis the GDR. Hubacher stated that he was opposed to such restrictions and advocated a strengthening of the economic relations between Switzerland and the GDR. He promised to have talks with both finance minister Willy Ritschard (a social democrat) and the presidents of the major Swiss banks. **At a later date Hubacher stated that he could not remember any such agreement and denied any right of access to files concerning his person.**⁴¹

The return visit by a delegation from the SED's central committee to the Swiss Social Democratic Party took place between 4 and 7 June 1984. At this renewed meeting with representatives of the USSR's most important totalitarian satellite regime, its president, Helmut Hubacher, stressed once again how useful the 1982 visit had been and that he would repeat such a visit to the GDR at any time, despite the attacks from the democratic centre against such a visit. The joint communiqué that emerged contained the following passage: **"in this spirit, both sides stated that they were in favour of collaboration between communist and socialist parties as well as any other forces interested in maintaining peace in a broad**

⁴⁰ Talks between Erich Honecker and Helmut Hubacher. Discussed topical problems of securing peace and disarmament. Great concern about the situation being brought to a head by imperialism, in: *Neues Deutschland*, 2 July 1982.

⁴¹ Original files on relations between SPS and SED in the Foundation "Archive of the Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR" (SAPMO), Bundesarchiv Berlin, Finckensteinallee 63, Berlin. See also Res Strehle and Fred Müller: *Die Gabe der schlechten Erinnerung*. Secret SED documents refute Helmut Hubacher's account of the East Berlin Trip in 1982, in: *Facts No. 35*, 31 August 1995, p. 20 ff.

coalition of reason.⁴² This term “coalition of reason”, that was first invented jointly with the SED, is still being used by the Social Democratic Party today, but this time in the advances it is making towards the Swiss FDP (the Radical Party) and the CVP (Christian People’s Party)!

On 23 August 1984 the Swiss Social Democratic Party had the “honour” of writing the following lines to Nicolae Ceausescu, Secretary General of the Romanian Communist Party and one of the vilest criminals amongst the totalitarian rulers: **“It is an honour for the Swiss Social Democratic Party to express its most cordial congratulations to the Socialist Republic of Romania on the occasion of its fortieth anniversary, which is also a national public holiday. The Swiss Social Democratic Party is convinced that the good relations existing between the Communist Party of Romania and itself ought to continue to be fostered for the benefit of both countries.”**⁴³ In August 1985, it became public that a five-strong delegation of the Swiss Social Democratic Party under the leadership of Helmut Hubacher had been making highly discreet plans for a five-day visit to Bulgaria in response to an invitation from that country’s communist party.⁴⁴

Just how much the then vice president of the Swiss Social Democratic Party, Peter Vollmer, who is today a member of the National Council (federal parliament) worshiped the totalitarian economic policy and what his view on the democracies of the free West were emerge quite clearly in a speech he delivered at the SED’s party congress in 1986: **“At home, although we are members of Switzerland’s coalition federal government, we maintain a critical distance as regards our economic system, which we clearly oppose. And it is the same with the political hypocrisy that keeps coming to the fore in western democracy. [...] I was most impressed by the speech of your Secretary General, Comrade Erich Honecker, showing how well your economy and society are performing. As a representative of the Swiss Social Democratic Party and as a guest at your party congress, I am also impressed to see and feel how the people here in this country stand up for peace and justice and how they are making a contribution to a world and society that are fairer for people to live in through their very specific work.”**⁴⁵ At the thirteenth party congress of the communist “Party of Labour” held between 27 February and 1 March 1987, the SED officials who had been invited met the Swiss Social Democratic Party vice president, Peter Vollmer, and party secretary, Degen. The two Swiss participants stressed their interest in an exchange of views with the SED and expressed the wish to send a delegation to the German Democratic Republic (GDR) at the appropriate time.⁴⁶ Peter Vollmer, still a social-democratic member of the National Council, paid a visit to the totalitarian, socialist North Korea, during which he found **“an ethic that is not alien to western humanism”** and, in a sweeping statement, declared the food problem in the developing country to have been solved.⁴⁷

As late as September 1989, only days before the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Swiss Social Democratic Party congratulated the GDR state and party chairman, Erich Honecker, in a highly official letter on the fortieth

⁴² Hans Rudolf Böckli: Hubachers Flirt mit der DDR, in: Schweizerzeit No. 12, 6 July 1984.

⁴³ SPS to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Romania, Mr. Nicolae Ceausescu, Secretary General, 23 August 1984.

⁴⁴ Gottfried Höppli: Diskreter SPS-Besuch in Bulgarien, in: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 27 August 1985, p. 29.

⁴⁵ Frieden ist mehr als die Abwesenheit von Krieg. Speech by Peter Vollmer, vice president of the Social Democratic Party of Switzerland, in: Neues Deutschland, 21 April 1986, pp. 9-10. See also Profil No. 5, 1986, pp. 16-17.

⁴⁶ Original files in the Foundation "Archive of the Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR" (SAPMO), Bundesarchiv Berlin, Finckensteinallee 63, Berlin.

⁴⁷ Paul Rothenhäusler and Hans-Ueli Sonderegger: Erinnerung an den Roten Holocaust. Der Jahrhundertverrat der Intellektuellen, Stäfa 1999, p. 156. Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 17 March 2000, p. 15.

anniversary of his socialist dictatorship at the very time it was falling to pieces around him.⁴⁸ On 16 November 1989, only a matter of weeks before the fall of the atrocious Romanian regime of terror, the Swiss Social Democratic Party sent the following congratulatory telegram to the Communist Party of Romania: **“Dear Comrades, On behalf of the central committee of the Swiss Social Democratic Party, it is our joy and honour to convey to you our warmest possible congratulations on your coming Congress. Since all of us are deeply involved with the preparation and staging of the meeting of the Socialist International, we are not able to send a delegation to your important rally. With this message, we should like to wish you fruitful deliberations and to assure you of the solidarity of the comrades in our party. Yours fraternally, Jean-Pierre Métral, Secretary for International Relations.”**⁴⁹ It really would be a central undertaking for the Swiss Social Democratic Party finally to come to terms with the history of its relationship with totalitarianism!

In order to give ourselves an accurate picture of the full monstrosity of this social-democratic sycophantism towards the GDR regime with its contempt for human beings, we ought to remind ourselves of the parallels: the process of absorbing people into the state started at as early an age as possible under both the national socialists and the socialists. The **youth organisations** (“Hitler Youth” or “Free German Youth”) brought young people within the ambit of the **party organisation**, indoctrination of adults continued at their place of employment, and **their leisure activities were organised for them by the state too**. Economic well-being depended on conducting oneself correctly towards the state and its ideology. Any utterance or action that departed from the party line was spied on and denounced by **secret services** (the “Gestapo” or “Stasi”) and punished by the state. All forms of **freedom of speech** were repressed in both systems; the state determined what its citizens were allowed to read, write, see and hear. Massive restrictions were placed on people’s freedom of movement. **Anyone who failed to toe the line was locked up and tormented or executed in concentration camps, death cells or mental hospitals**. Numerous people were shot dead as they tried to escape. There was an **unimaginably pervasive leadership cult** (of Hitler, Ulbricht or Honecker). The churches were set to work in the service of the states, and if their representatives put up any resistance against the totalitarian power of the state they came in for massive suspicion, were made to suffer disadvantages and were inactivated. In both regimes **sport** became an **affair of state**; sporting competitions served basically only one purpose, that of ideological and nationalistic propaganda. The same applied to **culture and art**, which were forced to serve the state unreservedly. The **military** was used to provide ideological training, the soldiers of the GDR’s *Volkarmee* marched the same goosestep as the *Wehrmacht* had done during the Nazi period.

⁴⁸ Peter Müller: Sozialdemokratie und linker Faschismus, in: Schweizerzeit No. 8, 24 March 2000.

⁴⁹ Parti Socialiste Suisse au Parti Communiste roumain, 16 November 1989.

VIII. Collectivism and state omnipotence as the root causes of terror

All of this monstrous injustice is only possible because of the failure to recognise where the state has its limits and because collectivism is then placed at the heart of things. That is how totalitarianism comes into being, and **collectivism** was then indeed **also the decisive characteristic of both socialism and national socialism**. The term “collectivism” is applied to thinking in terms of groups and the idea that the state, a dominant party or a political leader is placed above everything else. It is the citizens’ duty to serve the state, the leader or the party. The “community of class” or the “community of race” is everything, and individuals are merely part thereof and their justification is derived solely therefrom.

Despite all the differences that there have been, collectivism and the omnipotence of the state or its political representatives have been the common characteristics of the totalitarian currents of the twentieth century. The anti-capitalist, anti-democratic and anti-bourgeois thrust was viewed as progressive amongst both the national socialists and the socialists compared with the allegedly “anti-quoted” bourgeois society. Nearly everything about “fascism”, with its illiberal, centralistic principle of The Leader, is socialist: the history of its original roots, its intellectual sources, its leading figures and the agitation mechanisms it applies.⁵⁰ **One thing that both totalitarian ideologies had in common was that the state was to allot to each individual human being his or her appointed place in society.** As history has most clearly proven, this sort of collectivism leads to servitude, tyranny, terror, despotism and, to top it all, to severe disappointment of material expectations. In the name of a “higher morality”, both systems created a collectivistic order, within which people always had to be kept in virtuous obedience through the use of the police and sanctions. The freedom of the individual was tethered by all the totalitarian regimes: between 1917 and 1989 through communism, between 1922 and 1944 through fascism, and between 1933 and 1945 through national socialism.

What is at stake is the alternative between freedom and servitude. That is why the freedom of the individual must be at the centre of our endeavours. **The freedom of the individual is the most important concern of the Swiss federal constitution.** Political parties and politicians are there to serve the citizen – not the other way round. That is why I fight for a community that is rooted in the freedom of the individual, and why I fight against collectivism.

⁵⁰ Roland Baader: Kreide für den Wolf. Die tödliche Illusion vom besiegten Sozialismus, Gräffelfing 1991, p. 269.

IX. The pessimistic view of humanity

The state omnipotence – etatism – that is an integral part of the totalitarian systems is predicated on a pessimistic view of humanity: **it sees people as being too weak to look after themselves and as needing the uninterrupted, dominating, property-seizing solicitude of the state and its functionaries.** The freedom of the individual is subordinated to the organisation, the concentration of power, the control mechanism and the whole apparatus. The individual is reduced to being a mere instrument of the state – often in the name of what sounds like positive sentiments. **Now every single human being is something incomparable, irreplaceable, inestimable.** But socialism – like fascism – always wants to regulate everything. It is moulded by trust in regulations rather than trust in freedom.

This exaggerated collectivism destroys the character, leads to people who cannot stand upright and whose lips are sealed in the face of injustice, since in this system the naked existence of each individual depends on the powers that be. No form of criticism is any longer without risk to life and limb. **Our rejection of the state's claim to everything is the protection of the freedom of the citizen, the best protection against exaggerated nationalism – chauvinism – and thus, at the same time, a bulwark against looking down on those who belong to other countries and peoples.** The policy currently being pursued by the Swiss social democrats and socialists is heading in a direction likely to spell disaster. It is a policy that places restrictions on the individual citizen's freedom of choice, one that wants to expand the state's authority and coercive powers. It is a policy that encourages collectivism and etatism, the omnipotence of the state.

X. Command economy and centralism as the root evil

The socialists – just like the national socialists – fought against the market economy and advocated a centralistic command and planned economy. All powers were to be invested in a central supervisory authority. In “anti-capitalism”, both sides had an effective propaganda tool available to them during the economic crisis. The term “socialism” remained an important component of national socialism’s self-image. The national-socialist dictatorship quite simply took away the property of any citizens who did not satisfy its “race-ethical” criteria. The socialist dictatorships abolished private property altogether. If the two systems had guaranteed private property, then the wrong they wrought would never have been possible. Both the socialist states and the Nazi state maintained their insistence on state control and intervention.⁵¹

Today, the economic and moral superiority of the free market economy, in which the state does as little as possible to tamper with the sovereignty of the consumers, has long since been proven in both practice and theory. Every impairment of economic freedom, every single intervention by government, every planning and control measure spells coercion. If the state steers the economy, then it is the state that must decide which of its citizens’ needs it is going to satisfy and which not. In so doing, the state also determines which values are higher and which lower, what people have to believe and what they have to strive for. **In the market economy, performance is judged not (as in the socialist or national-socialist state) by a bureaucratic body or a political party, but democratically: through the free choice of the consumers.** It is our intention to repeat this scientifically proven fact as often as is necessary until the socialists in Switzerland have understood it too!

In the planned economy, the objectives of the political measures are so far-reaching that attempts have to be made to deploy a huge bureaucracy to get the gigantic apparatus under control. **That explains why in all totalitarian systems we find bureaucratic time-wasting that is completely out of control and countless government offices locked in rivalry with each other. One element that fascism and socialism have in common is the tendency to regulate and organise human interrelationships right down to the most intimate details.** In such circumstances, the creative force of the individual inevitably becomes emaciated. Socialist politics did not invent computers or dishwashers or mountain bikes. It was the market alone that did that.

Economic freedom is not a subordinate right to other freedoms: the loss of economic freedom means the loss of all freedoms. The possibility of acquiring private property is an important guarantee of freedom and against arbitrary acts of government – not only for those owning the property but also for those who do not own any (yet). The competition between employers vis-à-vis workers only operates in the market economy. If the state is the only employer then the worker is totally at its mercy.

⁵¹ The official publication organ of the SPS described the economic, property, price and money system of national socialist Germany in 1940 as follows: "The success of this system is indisputable, despite frictional difficulties. It is leading to a situation where the significance of money has changed completely. Since the money economy has not basically been eliminated, the possession of money still remains the prerequisite for the acquisition of goods, but it no longer gives people the entitlement to acquire goods. The material acquisition power of money has deliberately been restricted. Money only has purchasing power for the quantity of goods that the state will permit the owner of the money to buy. This has also changed the concept of ownership. What was previously the most free and universally usable form of ownership, i.e. the possession of money, now only has a limiting value, and hence property can no longer be used freely or in any manner desired". Berner Tagwacht, official publication organ of the SPS, No. 164, 16 July 1940, p. 1.

XI. Enforced solidarity

Under both national socialism and socialism, morality was dictated from on high; ethics were imposed by power and the rulers. We, on the other hand, campaign for the morality and ethics of people who are free to decide. **Emancipated citizens making up their own minds form such diversity that they are much less easy to manipulate than a levelled-down mass, in which the individual counts for nought.** Confidence in the citizens is a decisive feature of liberal conviction. By way of contrast, distrust in people's powers of discernment (often going hand-in-hand with intellectual arrogance) is a characteristic of socialist policy. It is by no means rare for pseudo saints and pseudo moralists to destroy freedom and the market economy under the cloak of morality and ethics. In so doing, they are blocking off the fountains from which private, voluntary solidarity flows.

There is no point whatsoever in prescribing compulsory solidarity – no-one can concern themselves with all their fellows. The span of responsibility of the individual is always limited. It must remain a right of each free person to decide which needs appear most important to him or her. In a free society, equality before the law is the only equality that is possible and necessary. **The demand for the material equality of all citizens can only be achieved by totalitarian powers.**

Any solidarity that is imposed from above is without moral value. **Our decision to display solidarity only has such a moral value if we shoulder the responsibility for it ourselves and if we have the freedom to give deliberately less priority to our own interests.** The state has no right to be generous at the expense of others. Anyone who is forced to behave in accordance with solidarity through constantly increasing taxes, levies and charges will not become more social, but more reluctant and increasingly selfish. It was not a matter of chance that in the communist East with its so-called "social justice" individual selfishness reached a level that it would be virtually impossible to exceed. Nor is it a matter of chance that it is in societies that are at least to some extent free that the largest voluntary donations are made. The members of a society who are forced to do good in every respect have no right to claim any credit for it. **What is particularly catastrophic is that under socialism those who take steps to look after themselves and their families are branded as selfish and egotistic. In reality, however, it is a sign of social solidarity to do all one can to ensure one's livelihood and hence not become a burden on others.** It is only when an individual's own endeavours no longer suffice that private or state welfare is called on to act. If state coercion to practise solidarity orders citizens to share their cloaks with the needy, like Saint Martin, then, once the cloak has been shared umpteen times over, no-one has more than a single thread left, and everyone freezes to death. It would make much more sense for everyone to ensure their own livelihoods, so that they would finally all be able to purchase a whole cloak.

XII. “Tax concessions”

Under totalitarian systems, as much as possible is taken away from the people, so that the state then has as much as possible available to it to carry out its many, unlimited tasks. **Both national socialism and socialism base themselves on the assumption that the state has a basic right of ownership over everything held by the people.** Such disastrous ideas are gaining ever more currency in Switzerland, even amongst the ranks of the democratic centre in politics. **No-one seems to object to the use of the term ‘tax concessions’, which is totalitarian and at odds with property ownership.** This term is always thrown into the debate whenever taxes are to be reduced or simply not increased. **Behind the very concept of ‘tax concessions’ lurks the idea that the state actually has a right to the full income of each of its citizens.** If it happens that people in gainful employment are allowed to keep a little more for themselves and if they are no longer required to part with quite so much, then terms like ‘tax concession’ are used. So individuals are apparently meant to be in raptures that the state has been so generous as to leave them anything at all. We are given the impression that, in reality, we were not talking about whether we are being forced to part with a bit more or a bit less and thus suffer a reduction in our personal incomes for the benefit of the state! The state is increasingly depriving people of the possibility of disposing freely of their income by taking it away from them in the form of taxes, levies and charges. The other side of the equation is that it is increasingly snatching for itself the function of providing for people’s vital needs – which it defines itself.

XIII. “Primacy of politics”

The socialists and social democrats in Switzerland are fond of using the term “primacy of politics” and are also trying to see the idea through for all it is worth. They want politics to dominate every aspect of life and, in particular, of course, economic life. Control over the individual citizens (so they maintain) must, in the final analysis, reside in the hands of the state and its politicians. **Socialism and national socialism alike called for the total politicisation of the whole of life in all its facets, both of the individual and the community, no longer permitting either limits or exceptions.** No-one was any longer allowed to collect stamps or breed rabbits unless they did so in accordance with the rules of national socialism or socialism. Not a single corner was left, not one sphere remained free from the state, where individuals might have been able to sneak away and hide.⁵² If taken to its logical conclusion, the primacy of politics leads to the ‘total state’, which annuls individual private existences and home life. A German constitutional lawyer wrote the following in 1936: **“The ethical position of national socialism emerges clearly in the [...] sentence ‘common good before individual good’, from which the active opposition to every form of individualism (and in this sense, liberalism) is derived.”**⁵³

Now we must fight with complete and utter resolution against that. The very idea that the state, the administration or the politicians should rule over the citizens is something that I regard as a form of modern despotism. We want to have the people determining government and politics and not the other way round. **It is the citizens who should form, mould and dominate the community.** That is the inherent idea behind democratic, federalist Switzerland. **That is why we stand for democracy, particularly for democracy with a particular Swiss mark to it, namely direct democracy.** That is why we take a decisive stand against a return to feudalism of the kind rife in the European Union. We want to have each individual citizen shouldering political responsibility and we thus reject the idea that a limited number of officials in politics or the diplomatic service should rule of the vast majority of people. **Unfortunately, the belief in the omnipotence of the states has a long tradition and is still forceful in the thinking of European politicians, amongst socialists in all parties.** That is the reason why, notwithstanding all the bonds of friendship that link us to the countries and peoples of this continent, we wish to remain free from becoming tied up in the European Union and all its various entities. The socialists and social democrats are delighted to see that the European Union is organised in a centralistic and bureaucratic “top down” manner. The dangerous magic formula in this context is “harmonisation”. The socialists want to have politics and the administration deciding on everything at the highest level possible and thus the same everywhere. That is why they want to join the European Union as quickly as possible. What we want, on the other hand, is decisions that are taken democratically and thus at the lowest level possible. That is why we are fighting for a Switzerland that will remain true to itself and its values: freedom, independence, direct democracy and federalism.

⁵² Wilhelm Röpke: *Wirrnis und Wahrheit. Ausgewählte Aufsätze*, Erlenbach/Zurich/Stuttgart 1962, p. 259.

⁵³ Wilhelm Sauer: *Rechts- und Staatsphilosophie. Eine systematische Einführung in das lebende Recht*, Stuttgart 1936, p. 46. Quoting Marcel Senn: *Rechtsgeschichte – ein kulturhistorischer Grundriss*, 2nd Edition, Zurich 1999, p. 304.

XIV. The “Ministry of Truth”

The totalitarian systems of national socialism and socialism place their ideological “ethics” above the rule of law and reverence and respect for life. A preliminary stage to such coercive measures is being played out before our very eyes at present in the guise of a rallying call to an alleged “community of ethical values” in the European Union, which is under predominantly socialist rule and is currently doing all it can to undermine the right to democratic self-determination of one of its members. **Preaching morality and the rule of the “goodies” are unfortunately ideas that are also very widespread in Switzerland, in politics, the media and society as well as in business.** The goal to strive for no longer appears to be a willingness to shoulder responsibility, but rather one of having an immaculately clean political record to show off. When the state starts to qualify the views of its citizens as “good” or “bad”, as “reasonable” or “unreasonable”, as “mature” or “immature”, then it is acting in as undemocratic a manner as is imaginable. Democracy is the form of government of alternatives. **If the state does not tolerate any other opinion, if it besmears it and condemns it as morally inferior, then it is indulging in totalitarian thought.** How often have reproachable objectives been pursued with slick, moralistic catchphrases and opponents of such objectives pushed aside on account of their allegedly immoral stance. From the experiences with national socialism and socialism, George Orwell described in his novel “*Animal Farm*”,⁵⁴ how the sheep were not able to do anything else than to keep on bleating out the glib political slogans of the ruling pigs. In Orwell’s novel “*1984*”⁵⁵ Big Brother, the party leader and symbol of the omnipresent state, watches and influences each individual right through to their intimate lives. Words take on the opposite meanings, and the party’s guiding principles are: “war is peace, freedom is slavery, ignorance is strength.” A monstrous propaganda machine ensures that people’s memories are continuously reprogrammed. In a “Ministry of Truth”, history is rewritten or invented as the need arises and any documentary evidence to the contrary is destroyed. In order to place truth and lies on the same plane, the dictator even invents a new language, which excludes any type of divergent thought. **The worst offence in the totalitarian state described by Orwell is thus “double think”.** Tendencies towards such a totalitarian “Ministry of Truth” are also to be found in Switzerland. On 23 March 2000, an initiative was launched in the National Council (parliament) calling for the creation of a state “arbitration body” which would be required to examine political manifestos and advertising material used during electoral campaigns and decide on what was “true” or “untrue”.⁵⁶ **Now, of course, anything would be accepted as politically true and moral if it just happened to suit the whims of the government, the administration and the majority of the parties.** There can be no doubt that, during the campaign leading up to the 1992 referendum vote on the European Economic Area, such a “Ministry of Truth” would have forbidden us to maintain that there would be no increase in interest rates and inflation following a No, that the parity of the Swiss franc would not fall and that the level of unemployment would not climb to that of the European Union members. Government, administration, trade associations and nearly all the parties had, after all, declared the opposite to be the “truth” at the time. Any such “arbitrator of truth” would, quite naturally, have forbidden us in 1994 from forecasting that adoption of the proposed new law on health insurance would lead to massive increases in premiums. The government, administration, health-insurance funds and virtually all the political parties asserted the opposite at the time. **Wherever “ministries of truth” are set up, the totalitarian state is knocking at the door, because that is where the right of free speech is trampled underfoot.** What is particularly worrying is that it is not only leftists but members of the democratic centre too who are failing to notice that they voted in favour of George Orwell’s horror visions in the Swiss federal parliament.

⁵⁴ George Orwell: *Animal Farm*, London 1945.

⁵⁵ George Orwell: *1984*, London 1949.

⁵⁶ Parlamentarische Initiative Judith Stamm (CVP, Lucerne): Anrufinstanz bei Abstimmungskampagnen, Verhandlungen des Nationalrats, 23 March 2000. *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* No. 71, 24. March 2000, p. 18.

XV. State propaganda

Socialism and national socialism or fascism show contempt for human beings on account of their illiberal, levelling nature and are so much in contradiction to the fundamental needs of individuals that such systems need to have systems for the continuous hammering home of messages and indoctrination. **Totalitarian rule, encompassing all facets of life, includes the human soul too, it subjugates the conscience and is ready to sacrifice everything that is right, sensible, human and true to the collective.** Even at tender nursery-school age, the state and its ideology take possession of small children and do not let people go again until death. The means employed for the purpose are indoctrination, brainwashing, manipulation, defamation, obfuscation and re-education.

The state takes all the means of mass communication into its own hands as an instrument of control and uses them to the full for its own ends. It alone proclaims the truth, claims exclusive intellectual rights and declares all liberal outlooks on life to have been allegedly “surpassed”. Totalitarian systems place their trust in indoctrination instead of in the free decisions of individuals responsible for themselves. Political propaganda is a matter for the state and is the task of a special propaganda ministry set up for the purpose. Democracy’s choice could not be more different; it is the private electoral propaganda of various different parties and individuals, in precisely the same way as the market economy uses advertising. This democratic electoral propaganda does not eliminate the electors’ freedom any more than advertising eliminates the consumers’ freedom of choice.

Certain tendencies that have emerged in Switzerland recently, for the government and administration to intervene in referendum campaigns, are highly problematical and must be resolutely fought against. It is totally new and completely unacceptable to have cabinet ministers issuing official calls for people to sign popular initiatives, to set up their own collecting points within the federal administration and to gather signatures within the administration (paid for by the people) as happened, for instance, with the popular initiative for Switzerland to join the United Nations. Each Swiss federal ministry now has its own advertising unit, and numerous information bureaucrats are bombarding the people, who may be more or less interested, with glossy brochures presenting the government’s concerns. When the “chief communication officer” of the Swiss federal ministry of finances makes the demand that the authorities ought to put across their point of view in referendum campaigns, to be paid for out of the taxpayer’s money, then things are going in a direction that cannot but cause us concern. The officer in question does indeed quite correctly recognise that: **“The shaping of public opinion is a process that can easily be manipulated. Governments, particularly when under pressure to produce successes, tend to rush into the use of propaganda – most frequently and most readily in totalitarian forms of government.”**⁵⁷ That makes it all the more alarming that the author still comes out in favour of advertising campaigns to be instigated by the Swiss federal cabinet (“Federal Council”) “within certain limits” and thus in favour of a dangerous step towards a totalitarian form of government. **Such threatening tendencies should not be accepted under any circumstances in the interest of a liberal state practising direct democracy.**

⁵⁷ Daniel Eckmann: Kopf oder Bauch? Soll der Bund in einen Abstimmungskampf mit einer Werbekampagne eingreifen dürfen? Ja, aber nur innerhalb gewisser Schranken und nach Klärung der rechtlichen Grauzone, in: Die Weltwoche No. 7, 17 February 2000, p. 21.

XVI. Socialism in the land of freedom

In the course of the last two decades, creeping socialisation, the belief in the state, public indebtedness and the burden of taxes, levies and charges to be borne by the people have not stopped increasing. The Swiss state has assumed ever more powers for itself and thus increasingly eroded individual freedoms. Through taxation and redistribution, the state in Switzerland now controls almost half the national income and thus the resources, products and services. **In 1970, the public spending ratio was 20% of the gross domestic product; today it stands at around 40%.** Contrasting with that, other countries, such as the USA, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and New Zealand have recognised what a ruinous blind-alley that was and today they have gratifying economic developments to show for it. Unfortunately, even Swiss politicians belonging to the democratic centre are blurring the unfortunate situation and are still continuing to benchmark Switzerland against the bad examples rather than the good ones. **The Swiss People's Party, which was set up in 1917 as a bulwark of the democratic centre to oppose socialism, has had to watch the sorry spectacle of socialism spreading more and more in our country – with support from the democratic centre.** We are fighting against the growing trend towards a mentality of paternalism of the state, which makes people dependent, inflates the social bureaucracy and is working towards greater and greater redistribution. If Switzerland were to join the European Union, this fateful trend would become accentuated still further. That is precisely the reason why the Swiss Social Democratic Party wants to join the European Union as soon as possible. In order to uphold liberalism, the Swiss People's Party unconditionally rejects membership of the European Union as it is today, since national sovereignty, federalism and direct democracy still form the most effective protective shield against any further inroads of socialism.

XVII. Freedom or socialism – the key question of the 21st century

The key question at the outset of the new century is that of freedom. **The call addressed to the socialists here in Switzerland at the threshold to the twenty-first century is not only one to consider objectively the past of their ideology and the roots it has in common with other totalitarian tendencies, but to examine carefully the question of the socialism of the future.** Socialists are not evil beings, but victims of a fatal intellectual error. **Unfortunately, the thinking within the Swiss Social Democratic Party today is still lagging a long way behind the facts that emerged clearly a long time ago and is still focusing on the collective rather than the interest of the individual.** What we want to hear from these socialists is whether they are still advocating the defeat of capitalism and are thus despising the property-owning rights of the people of this country and the market economy. We urge socialists in all parties to face up to this fundamental discussion for the coming century, instead of trying to prevent it from taking place with their recourse to ultimatums and threats.

But the democratic centre has sidestepped the fundamental issue of freedom or coercion, of liberalism or socialism in recent years too. It is frightening when more and more parties and politicians seek to shy away from the fundamental debate on the role of the state and the needs of its citizens. People shouldering responsibility for themselves must once again become the central concern of the politics of the democratic centre. It is the crucial question of state omnipotence or freedom of the individual that is demanding an answer. **The fight for the freedom of the Swiss citizens started over 700 years ago.** Yet it is a fight that is never won: resting on the laurels of past achievements and deviating from the course of individual responsibility would be fateful. If we decide to opt for the road of integration in the European Union, then we will be one country amongst many others following a path, much of which is marred by socialism and levelling down. **What we want, however, is for our country to become a shining example of liberalism again through the extraordinary achievements of its citizens – and therefore to be a special case. We are thus re-invoking the most important tenet of the Swiss concept of the state: freedom!**

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