

A dialogue with absentees
A speech in quotes:
By their words shall you judge their deeds.

Albisgüetli Speech 2003

Defining our political position on the occasion of the
15th Albisgüetli Conference of the Swiss People's Party (SVP) of Canton Zurich

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I. On dialogue

This year's traditional Albisgüetli Conference of the Zurich SVP is as popular as ever, with 1253 citizens here today. And I can report that several thousand more would love to be with us as well, were there enough room. We receive letters **from people all over Switzerland** – and not only SVP members – asking to attend, even just once.

So what is the attraction of this event? After all, the Albisgüetli Conference is a **political occasion**, and politics, we are told, don't interest anyone any more. People have lost their faith in politics. So how do you explain such enthusiastic attendance at this event?

The **Albisgüetli Conference** has **style, quality, character**. Which is why thousands want to be here tonight.

At a time when we hear so many lies, when there is so little sense of direction, the SVP's **Albisgüetli Conference** offers people **an alternative**.

- The Albisgüetli Conference is a vigorous political demonstration that **points the way ahead**. It has grown out of our **concern for Switzerland** and about **what is best for the Swiss people**.
- The **Albisgüetli Conference** is a **refreshing change** from the usual moralising **chatter heard in political circles** today. It is committed to a good, **open political style**. At the Albisgüetli Conference we are not afraid to call a spade a spade, to point out blunders and their perpetrators.
- The **Albisgüetli Conference** is committed to **dialogue**, to an **exchange of opinions**, which is just as it should be in a genuine democracy.

This is why, as we embark upon a new year, the President of the Zurich SVP is expected to give a **clear-cut presentation of the party's position** to be followed, as usual, by a **counter-speech**, possibly setting out an **entirely different** future for Switzerland. Each individual citizen can then **make up his own mind**.

Normally, our **guest speaker** is the acting **Federal President**, if he has the courage to attend. He has the last word. We do not quibble with what he has to say. Even if what has been said in the past has not coincided with the SVP's opinion, these speeches have always been met with respect and warm applause.

As is our tradition then, we again invited the Federal President – **Pascal Couchepin, Radical Democratic member of the Federal Council** – to attend this year's conference. He kindly agreed, and wrote me the following letter on 13 September 2002:

Letter dated 13 September 2002
To Dr. Christoph Blocher
From Pascal Couchepin

Dear Christoph,
I still owe you a final answer about the Albisgüetli Conference. My diary for the New Year period is already very full, but I could reserve the evening of 17 January for you.

As things stand now, I will be able to accept your invitation. I look forward, of course, to the "warm applause" from your SVP members.

Would you please contact Ms Kobelt of the EVD's Communications Unit (Tel. 31 322 20 59) in due course to clarify organisational questions?

Best regards
Pascal Couchepin

Then, however, long after the invitations had already been sent out, and after Pascal Couchepin had first made sure he was elected Federal President on 4 December 2002 with, amongst others, the votes of the SVP fraction, we received another letter declining our invitation just before Christmas – on 19 December – actually dated 13 December 2002 and obviously concocted over a period of days at the office of the federal administration. No longer addressed to "Dear Christoph", but rather to Mr Hans-Peter Frei, a member of the Cantonal Council and head of our Organising Committee. Here is what Mr Couchepin wrote:

Letter dated 13 December 2002
To Mr Hans Peter Frei
From Mr Pascal Couchepin

Dear Mr Frei,

With reference to my letter of 13 September 2002 to Dr. Christoph Blocher, in which I agreed in principle to attend the Albisgüetli Conference, and with reference also to your letter of invitation of 14 November 2002, I wish to respond as follows.

At its last session, the Federal Council discussed the annual events to which one of its members is regularly invited. The Federal Council concluded that in the future, the Federal President's attendance at events of this type should be kept to a minimum and that there is no reason why the Federal President should appear regularly at events organised by a cantonal party. The Albisgüetli Conference was also discussed in this context.

As a result of the conclusions of the Federal Council and in view of the political discussion in past weeks I have decided not to attend the Albisgüetli Conference.

I hope I may count on your understanding and wish you a Happy Christmas and a good New Year.

Best regards
P. Couchepin

And just listen to this Ladies and Gentlemen: As fate would have it, on the same day the letter of cancellation arrived at our offices, Mr Couchepin complained in a newspaper interview:

*"We do not foster enough dialogue with people, we must enter into more discussion. [...] From time to time, we ought to sit down and talk about the basics of politics."*¹

In his New Year's speech, Mr Couchepin even called for political players to:

*... "bring problems out into the open and develop more democratic dialogue."*²

Well said, Mr Federal President! So why aren't you here, Mr Couchepin? Or perhaps someone has seen him? Perhaps he's on his way here, trying to promote "dialogue" with the people? And is still out there looking for us, here, there and everywhere...Hello, Mr Couchepin, **we're over here!** True debate is not conducted exclusively amongst one's nearest and dearest, where everyone is like-minded. The Albisgüetli Conference would have been the perfect place to "develop more democratic dialogue". I for one would not have let such an opportunity go by. What a dream – the chance to speak to a thousand people from another party. Give me a thousand Radical Democrats! You could definitely count on me being at a meeting like this. But could you count on a thousand Radical Democrats! These days it's difficult to scrape together a thousand Radical Democrats who a) actually believe in liberalism and act accordingly and b) are still members of the FDP. It would be much easier to find a thousand former Radical Democrats. Some of them – and not the worst of them by far – are with us today, having found a political home with a party that stands up for Switzerland and really lives by the democratic programme which the FDP promised in the past.

¹ 'Die Weltwoche', 19.12.2002.

² www.admin.ch/ch/d/cf/alloc/20030101.html

II. A dialogue with absentees

We – ladies and gentlemen – we are the ones conducting this dialogue. Unfortunately, however, it has unavoidably become a **dialogue with absentees**.

It is certainly no coincidence that our political opponents are unwilling to engage in dialogue: **Anyone who points the finger at outrage and abuse in the state system**, addresses pressing **problems**, criticises the status quo out of concern for Switzerland and its citizens, anyone who offers actual **solutions**... the criticism they voice will inevitably target the SP, FDP and CVP "coalition of losers", the coalition that is apparently so hard of hearing.

But – ladies and gentlemen – do these parties really believe they can solve even one problem by **refusing to listen**, by refusing to engage in dialogue and by ostracising their critics?

Do these politicians actually think that the **200 billion francs** of national debt will disappear as if by magic if no one talks about them any more?

Do the SP, FDP and CVP really think the huge **abuse of our asylum system** will simply stop if no one mentions it?

And does this united left believe that no one at home or abroad notices how two-faced is the **European policy** pursued by the members of the Federal Council merely because a curtain of silence is drawn over this dishonest attitude?

Our opponents and many in the media want to **muzzle** the SVP. Well they won't succeed! We will not be any part of this sad coalition of people who prefer to conceal and hush up the truth. Even if the Senior Editor of the DRS TV channel recently told his employees not to allow the SVP to make unwarranted use of the TV as a "*means of promoting election propaganda*"³ – we will not be budged from the straight and narrow! State TV obviously believes that even portraying the reality is too dangerous. The **media world is pitiful indeed** if it can only defend itself by such means. But it shows our media representatives in their true colours: the "bleeding hearts" Mafia simply screens out anything we are not allowed to talk about. That is what politically correct censure looks like today.

A member of the National Council recently criticised the SVP for representing "*the people's voice*"⁴.

³ Ueli Haldimann, Senior Editor of SF DRS, "Newsletter" of 13.12.2002.

⁴ Cécile Bühlmann National Councillor for the Environmentalists, in the National Council, 20.3.2002.

What kind of criticism is that, I ask you? Whom else are we supposed to represent? Creatures from outer space? Or perhaps the **SP's interests**? The FDP and the CVP already do that!

Or should we perhaps represent the **interests of the European Commission**? The Swiss federal administration is already doing a good job in that department.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, Mr Couchepin declined to attend. So we looked around for another Radical Democrat. We couldn't find one, but we did manage to come up with a former Radical Democrat – there are rather more of those available!

And so I would like to extend a warm welcome to a former FDP member. Our guest speaker today is a highly regarded Professor of Economics who has devoted a lot of thought to Switzerland and has never hesitated to put forward his views, even if they are sometimes unconventional or awkward. There are many matters on which he does not share our opinions. But he is a valiant man in the best sense of the word. He also agreed to speak to us today without hesitation – and has kept his word. **So please join me in extending a very warm welcome to Professor Dr. Walter Wittmann!**

III. 2003: An election year

2003 is an election year. And in this election year, it is the stated aim of all the political parties, from the SP to the CVP and FDP, to weaken the SVP. Not very substantial in terms of an election programme! But understandable. A weakened SVP would no longer be capable of effectively opposing the political blunders of the united Left. **The united Left would like nothing better than to be left undisturbed to slumber on, ruinous though this is.**

So why, in past years, have we found ourselves in growing conflict with the other governing parties, with the former non-socialist parties?

Because the other parties no longer stand for the values on which the success and strength of our country is based.

Namely:

- **our autonomy;**
- **citizens with a sense of individual responsibility;**
- **a liberal and lean constitutional state;**
- **a healthy mistrust of our authorities;**
- **dislike of foreign judges;**
- **open, courageous expression of opinion.**

The SVP knows: these are the values inherent in Swiss quality. The SVP is committed to this **Swiss quality**. And we are scoring more and more successes:

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- Thanks to the SVP, Zurich residents voted for the **abolition of inheritance taxes**.
 - Thanks to the untiring efforts of the SVP for an **urgently needed tax cut**, the Zurich Cantonal Council at least agreed to a modest **reduction in tax**.
 - Rejecting the **Zurich Secondary School Act** put a brake on the chaotic and **misguided reforms** in the education sector, where the result of constant amendments is that so many of our children are no longer able to either read or write properly.
 - In the Federal Council and parliament, numerous damaging projects were **not initiated because of fear of the SVP, or were at least left to lie at the back of some drawer**.
 - Thanks to our resistance there has been no **reform of constitutional law with state secretaries, no professional parliament, no constitutional Article concerning a policy on economic development, no blue helmets and no Solidarity Foundation**.
 - We have put a brake on **Swiss aspirations to join NATO**.
 - And the most important: **We have prevented Switzerland from putting itself at a disadvantage by joining the EU and the EEA**.

And the SVP is the only party with solutions for numerous other problems:

- The SVP has put forward a specific solution for the use of the **National Bank's gold**.
- The SVP has a specific solution for **dealing with the asylum catastrophe**.
- The SVP has a specific solution for **reducing health insurance premiums**.
- The SVP wants to clarify **Switzerland's position vis-à-vis the European Union** and therefore wants to see our **application for membership withdrawn**.
- The SVP aims to safeguard **Switzerland's autonomy** and therefore wants to **stop the Bilateral Negotiations II with the EU**.
- The SVP wants to anchor **banking secrecy in the constitution**.
- The SVP is in favour of **neutrality** and **against our membership in the UNO**, where the problems of said membership are already becoming apparent.
- The SVP is committed to a **stronger economy**. It is the only party in favour of **substantial tax cuts and will fight the escalating flood of charges and fees**.
- The SVP is against having a **state airline**.
- The SVP is the only party making a credible effort to oppose **excessive government spending**.

What do the other parties have to offer, all those who praise themselves so loudly as "solution-oriented"?

I see only **total emptiness, no initiatives, no ideas, no action, no solutions, no party line, no leaders ... The only thing still moving amongst these three parties is the gaily revolving presidential merry-go-round.**

Yes, I can understand the reluctance to get involved in dialogue: if you have nothing to say, your only option is to refuse all dialogue. The Centre-Left SP, FDP and CVP coalition lies blissfully in bed, wallowing in its own lethargy and complaining: "Just look at the disgraceful SVP. All it does it criticise and bother us with action. Leave us in peace, you stubborn SVP! The billions in taxes make such a soft bed, and our well-paid jobs are so comfy!" **Where there are no arguments, no reasonable solutions, no useful policies, all you can do is resort to using moral grounds as a pretext:** The SVP is howled down as disgraceful, merely because it calls a spade a spade.

But we shall not be intimidated. The SVP has stood alone through all the most important votes in recent months. The moral guerrilla force from the press and politics has perverted the course of democracy by making the referendums on UNO membership, asylum abuse and the Solidarity Foundation a plebiscite on the SVP. The ruling class obviously no longer believes in the power of its own arguments. Despite this, and thanks to its untiring efforts, the SVP still attracted between 45 and 49.9% of the votes. The FDP, CVP, SP, Environmentalists, the Liberal Party, the Federal Council, the associations, the trade unions and the media together were only able to mobilise 50% of the voters for them. If that is not a **vote of no confidence!**

Ladies and Gentlemen, the SVP will continue its laborious work. We shall go on, as we always have done, as the **political motor** of our country, providing **new ideas and new impetus**. Whilst this task will not become any easier, it will certainly become more important. Since last Saturday, when the FDP elected Mrs Langenberger as its new president, it is clear that the FDP is sticking to its leftist guns. For once at least, the FDP has been consistent in electing a president who fits in with the party and its politics. It means that we, however, have another heavy burden to bear: **The SVP now has to represent all those voters who, until now, felt able to vote for the FDP.**

IV. The outcome of expenditure and tax policies: nothing but a lot of hot air

Dear friends of the SVP, an election year is a good year for taking stock. And what a catastrophic blow this exercise is to the ruling Centre-Left coalition. Let us start with expenditure and tax policies:

A moderate government is critically important to our economy – and hence to the prosperity and freedom of all of us. Moderate with legislation and regulations, and with expenditure and taxes above all. Ensuring less government, less expenditure and lower obligatory charges is the social challenge of our times.

I quote:

"The limits of the all-providing state are becoming dramatically apparent. [...] The reverse side of the coin is an explosion in national debt which will completely cripple the already overburdened next generations if we do not find the strength to turn the situation around here and now."⁵

Those words could have come from our own party programme. But they were the statesmanlike words of a Radical Democrat. In the grip of a thirst for action, these words were spoken by **Federal Councillor Kaspar Villiger** during a speech given in Rapperswil on 20 January 1996. His warning was addressed to his own party, the Radical Democrats. At the time, Kaspar Villiger had just taken over the Ministry of Finance from Otto Stich, Federal Councillor and member of the SP, who had resigned. And how right Kaspar Villiger was: **an all-providing state such as ours cannot be financed and therefore has no future.**

Our liberal Federal Councillor went on to add:

"We have no right to jeopardise our island of prosperity. I am counting on the Radical Democrats. The Radical Democrats promised voters they would do something to combat the financial crisis. So let us now move forward from words to deeds!"

I remember those January days in 1996, when I said to my wife: "I think people are beginning to see the light at last. Even the Radical Democrats have noticed what's up."

And where are we now, in this election year 2003? A deficit of **107 billion** at government level alone. Almost three times as much as in 1990! Despite the fact that **taxes and mandatory charges have increased** over the past ten years in Switzerland as in no other OECD country. Since Mr Villiger entered office, government expenditure has risen from CHF 40.5 billion to over CHF 51 billion. That is equivalent to an **increase of over 25%. That happened with the agreement of the Federal Council and the Radical Democrats, and against vigorous objections by the SVP.**

"So let us now move forward from words to deeds!"

⁵ Federal Councillor Kaspar Villiger at the Meeting of FDP Delegates on 20.1.1996 in Rapperswil.

That is what Villiger called on his FDP colleagues to do. Today we ask: and when will the Radical Democrats actually do something instead of talking? Obviously, they're still out there somewhere, on the way. They've been moving forward and moving forward from words to deeds for the last seven years. But where are the deeds? All we hear about are new promises, new position papers, new declarations of intent – but we never see any deeds. We've been waiting for seven years to see the FDP take any action. To this day, the FDP has not only not taken any action, it has also fought tooth and nail against anyone who was willing to do something.

The **SP**, meanwhile, has not even got going yet. There they are, still enjoying a morning coffee, paid for from the government coffers, of course. Just as well, perhaps. If they did finally muster up the energy to do something, they would probably march off in the wrong direction.

But if the **CVP** were to up and off, things would really be chaotic: CVP members would all scatter in different directions like a flock of chickens!

Let us consider a few more of Villiger's thoughts on financial policy in 1996:

"There should be no more expenditure without a simultaneous financing decision."

- Aha! And what about **Expo.02**? Where was the financing decision called for by Villiger? This national exhibition began as a pompous announcement and ended as a pompous nothing. And in the meantime, under the directorship of Radical Democrats Couchepin and Steinegger, 1.4 billion francs were swallowed up (as of 17 January 2002). That's **almost nine million francs per exhibition day**. Not including hidden contributions by the federal government and the cantons. For all the talk about "lasting benefits", all we have left now is a **lasting hole of billions of francs** in the budget. The Federal Council had originally talked about a public contribution of 130 million – including deficit guarantee!⁶ Steinegger, the Radical Democrat Expo President, even finished up giving himself a pat on the back for keeping expenditure under such tight control. Expenditure was only slightly over budget.⁷ Income – admittedly – did not meet budget expectations. Entrepreneurs all over Switzerland must be shaking their heads. Is this the Radical Democrats' new financial blueprint? Just imagine if I were to stand up in front of shareholders and proudly announce: "Control of expenditure was excellent. Unfortunately, however, we had no revenues." I would be asked to resign. Do the same thing in politics, however, and you find yourself rewarded with a seat on the Federal Council.

⁶ FDP Federal Councillor Jean-Pascal Delamuraz in the Council of States, 24.9.1996.

⁷ 'Luzerner Zeitung', 21.10.2002. Also mentioned on "Arena", broadcast by SF DRS, 18.10.2002.

- And what about the **Swissair debacle**? Here, too, at the drop of a hat, billions were pumped into a washed-out airline. The Radical Democrats, whom Kaspar Villiger had called to order in 1996, forgot all their basic principles only to paste over the sins of their party colleagues on the Swissair Board of Directors with billions of francs in tax revenues! **Once again, the man in the street had to bleed for the incompetent FDP.**

Expo.02 and the Swissair debacle have drained the government finances by over 3.5 billion francs. Without Expo.02 and Swiss, there would be no deficit in the 2002 accounts. **In both cases, the FDP and the CVP colluded with the SP to waste billions in taxes.**

As far as the **SP** is concerned, wasting money not earned by one's own means is at least part of the official party programme.

The **CVP** decided long ago to tag along quietly. It is powerless to oppose the SP and the FDP, worrying that if it does, it would have to give up one of its Federal Councillors.

But let us listen again to how Federal Councillor Villiger spoke to the Radical Democrats, and actually also to the Swiss people, in 1996:

"We must steel ourselves to say No more often. That takes political courage. I hope the Federal Council and parliament will have that courage."

I ask you, ladies and gentlemen:

Who had the courage to say No?

Which party stands for a consistent budget policy?

Who took Kaspar Villiger's forward-looking speech seriously?

Only the SVP, unfortunately.

Kaspar Villiger's Rapperswil speech of January 1996 was to have been the start of a thorough budget review. Two weeks later, the then new Minister of Finance gave an interview to the "Basler Zeitung", in which he said:

"I would love to make a small speech as a Federal Councillor at the National Exhibition in 2001 or 2002 announcing that the federal budget is now in order."⁸

I for one have heard nothing about this "small speech". Perhaps you've heard something? All I heard about last year were **credits of millions and billions for just that National Exhibition** and a **bankrupt airline**. What I heard last year was an **announcement about massive government deficits from 2003**. What I heard last summer was a Minister of Finance who informed us in fatherly style that Switzerland could really afford to put a few **billions into a**

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'Basler Zeitung', 5.2.1998.

"Solidarity Foundation" – which we were more or less blackmailed into, note well. And what I saw in parliament was a **fruitless battle by the SVP for savings and cost cuts.** The coalition of wastrels made a hobby of rejecting the SVP's savings plans.

Those who want to get a grip on government spending and those who want a federal budget which will permit a prosperous economy will vote for the SVP in 2003. Let's have no more truck with the coalition of wastrels.

But let's return to our dialogue with absentees and listen in again on the Radical Democrat Minister of Finance, Kaspar Villiger, who also talked about **economic policy** in the same speech:

"It is particularly important to keep state intervention to a minimum whilst keeping taxes and charges attractive."⁹

Low taxes are indeed Switzerland's big plus point. Or will we soon be saying low taxes **were** Switzerland's big plus point? I shall say it again – **the tax rate in Switzerland has risen faster since 1990 than in any other OECD country.** In the autumn session of 2002 alone, the parliament voted in favour of new taxes amounting to 970 million francs¹⁰. **All these tax increases were forced through against vigorous resistance from the SVP.** And the SVP was systematically ridiculed as the Say-No party.

Those who want lower taxes and charges, hand in hand with a flourishing economy, more jobs and fewer unemployed will vote for the SVP in 2003. Let's have no more truck with the parties who want to raise taxes.

And then, Ladies and Gentlemen, even though the other parties, and the FDP in particular, failed to implement the programme formerly announced by their own FDP Federal Councillor, the Centre-Left coalition did not at least try to remedy its errors. Certainly not; and the FDP in particular has found a way of making it easy for itself: **It gradually adapts its party programme to its actions, thereby trying to justify its wrong conduct with a socialist programme.**

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Kaspar Villiger at the Meeting of FDP Delegates on 20.1.1996 in Rapperswil.

¹⁰

Tobacco taxes 900 million, Energy taxes 70 million francs.

When a journalist recently reminded the Radical Democrat Federal President, Pascal Couchepin, that the FDP once campaigned with slogans such as "More Freedom – Less State", Couchepin responded:

*"That's true. And in the short-term, we may have won ourselves a few voters by doing so, but in the long-term we have created problems for ourselves."*¹¹

So how could a slogan like "More Freedom – Less State" have created problems for the FDP? Because the FDP no longer abides by this fundamental liberal truth, and because Couchepin says in the very same interview:

"We Radical Democrats must now set about strengthening the state."

Or because, as far back as 1995, a National Councillor and then Vice President of the FDP Switzerland had said:

*"We need a coalition of the FDP and the SP."*¹²

And former FDP party presidents don't want to get left behind. Last year, National Councillor Franz Steinegger announced:

*"One should never say No to state intervention."*¹³

Is that the new programme concocted by the FDP party strategists? Well they really shouldn't be surprised that business and middle-class voters are deserting them. **The FDP has betrayed its basic principles. And the electorate is letting them know that in no uncertain terms. Not because of the SVP. Because, and only because, the FDP has turned its back on its own liberal philosophy.**

This new, socialistically styled Radical Democrat philosophy stands in stark contrast to the liberal beliefs of less state and more freedom. But this **fashionable drivel** is, of course, an excellent excuse for state intervention in **Swissair, Expo.02, state child-raising, state business subventions, higher taxes and more expenditure.**

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is regrettable that we find ourselves having to criticise the FDP of all parties. In terms of philosophy, or at least original philosophy, we ought to be pulling in the same direction. The FDP ought to be our natural partner. Unfortunately, however, it no longer has the energy to act in line with its own programme, let alone actually implement it.

¹¹ 'Die Weltwoche', 11.12.2002.

¹² FDP National Councillor Peter Tschopp in 'Cash', 5.5.1995.

¹³ FDP National Councillor Franz Steinegger, 'HandelsZeitung', 2.10.2002.

The SVP is the party that now does what the Radical Democrats promised yesterday, but have no intention of doing today or tomorrow. Those who want to vote liberal in 2003 will vote SVP.

The SVP is now the only party with a **sound economic programme**. Any politician with financial responsibility who is really interested in a healthy government budget will pursue a liberal economic policy based on the following three basic principles:

1. **Low taxes.** Citizens must be protected from state organised plundering. Individuals make more efficient, more creative use of money than any administration.
2. **Less state intervention.** A healthy, liberal state is committed to encouraging individual responsibility and will want to strengthen its citizens' freedom of action. Liberalism means as much freedom as possible and just the necessary amount of state. An inflated state means not only bureaucracy and inefficiency; it also means the development of a huge structure of rules and official bodies which stifle all initiative and innovation.¹⁴ A state like that is in itself the **biggest obstacle to growth**.
3. **Restrict the influence of the Left** because the policy of expenditure embraced by the Left will destroy the prosperity of any country in the long term. The politics of the Left mean: irresponsible development of the social state based on debt and state intervention. A recipe for disaster.

V. The outcome of foreign policy: Nothing but contradictions

In 1992, the Swiss voted against membership of the EEA. And in 2001, Swiss voters massively rejected seeking accession to the EU. Yet those in Berne still do everything possible to rope Switzerland into the EU. The **central question** in this election year 2003 is therefore:

"What are your views on where Switzerland should be going? **Are you for an independent Switzerland?** Or will you, too, allow Switzerland to be swallowed up by the EU?"

The SVP is the only party of government committed to an autonomous, independent, neutral Switzerland. The SVP has no hesitations: **Bilateral Agreements** should only be negotiated as a means of **safeguarding our own interests**. And they only make sense if we are not also attempting to join the EU simultaneously. **A serious negotiator should therefore withdraw his**

¹⁴ See Ralf Dahrendorf: 'Fragmente eines neuen Liberalismus', Stuttgart 1987, p. 115.

application for membership. As the former State Secretary, Franz Blankart, found out when he was in charge of the EEA negotiations. One cannot be an EU candidate and still be involved in negotiating Bilateral Agreements at the same time. The Federal Council should either embark on accession negotiations with the EU or withdraw our application for membership: "*Tertium non datur.*"¹⁵

The EU today has no clear idea of where it stands with Switzerland. And Switzerland doesn't know where it stands with the Federal Council's foreign policy.

Staying out of the EU gives Switzerland a unique opportunity to offer an economic, political and cultural alternative. We would merely have to have the courage to be different: more hard-working, more liberal, better in terms of taxes, more democratic and more cosmopolitan.

With regard to the elections in 2003, this means:

- The SVP will safeguard the **fundamental Swiss values** which have made our country strong.
- The SVP will remain committed to these Swiss values even though this may require **backbone and an enduring capacity for resistance.**
- Swiss citizens can depend on the SVP to represent their interests **even in the toughest disputes.**
- The SVP is not for EU compatibility nor for a going-it-alone simply as a matter of principle, we are guided by the desire to pursue creative paths in line with our **own strengths.**

And the others?

Just how **credible**, how **successful** is our official foreign policy? We have no hope of a direct answer, as the Federal President is conspicuous by his absence. So let us take our dialogue with absentees a step further. Let us take the **Bilateral Negotiations as an example:**

To justify the NEAT project (New Alpine Rail Axis), Federal Councillor Ogi promised on 9 June 1992:

*"NEAT is the best guarantee of preserving the 28-ton limit."*¹⁶

¹⁵ 'NZZ am Sonntag', 27.10.2002.

¹⁶ SVP Federal Councillor, Adolf Ogi, in the National Council, 9.6.1992.

In the context of the Bilateral Negotiations, the Federal Council gave the following assurance in 1994:

"The Federal Council has no intention of giving way on the 28-ton question. Upholding this weight limit is one of the cornerstones of its transport policy."¹⁷

And on the same day, the spokesman for the Federal Council reaffirmed:

"We will not change our mind on the 40-ton question or give in to the EU."¹⁸

On 5 October 1995, just before the Swiss elections, prominent representatives of the SP and the Environmentalists made the following promise to their voters:¹⁹

"No", Switzerland must not give way on the 28-ton limit.²⁰

But just two years later, this **28-ton limit was thrown out, with the SP and the Environmentalists having played no small part in this act.** The Federal Council and the centre parties also quietly buried their positions on this matter.

How quickly this so-called "cornerstone"²¹ of the Federal transport programme was **taken off the agenda.** And that is precisely what we mean: the governing parties are abandoning their "cornerstones" everywhere, and not just as far as finance and business policies are concerned – foreign and security policies are victims, too! Where is the programme? Where is the goal? Where is the leadership?

Berne has a government with no programme, no goal, no solutions, no principles and no steadfastness. In these circumstances, negotiations with other states are fatal.

The following statements also show how contradictory and aimless our foreign policy is. Prior to the vote on the Bilateral Agreements, the Federal Council declared in 2000:

¹⁷ CVP Federal Councillor, Arnold Koller, in the National Council, 7.3.1994.

¹⁸ Federal Councillor Arnold Koller, 7.3.1994.

¹⁹ Amongst those concerned: Peter Bodenmann (SP), Ernst Leuenberger (SP), Franco Cavalli (SP), Andrea Hämmerle (SP), Paul Rechsteiner (SP) Cécile Bühlmann (GPS) and Pia Hollenstein (GPS).

²⁰ Facts, 5.10.1995.

²¹ CVP Federal Councillor, Koller, in the National Council, 7.3.1994.

*"The Bilateral Agreements are a separate and independent step and have nothing to do with EU membership."*²²

But immediately after this vote, **Joseph Deiss**, Minister of Foreign Affairs, claimed:

"There is nothing to stop us working on acquiring EU membership."²³

And the leader of the CVP fraction also made this appeal:

*"We should join the EU immediately."*²⁴

In the spring of 2001, 76.8% of Swiss voters sunk the "Yes to Europe" Initiative. With unbelievable **audacity**, Federal Councillor Deiss interpreted this result as agreement with the Federal Council's EU accession policy.²⁵

Ladies and Gentlemen, is it any wonder people **no longer trust** politicians and the Federal Council? At the same time, I can also hear Federal President Couchepin, as he makes an almost desperate call to the people in his New Year's speech:

"Our country must have renewed trust (...) in all those who shoulder responsibility in politics, science and society at large."

Mr Federal President, you can neither command nor beg for trust. Trust is earned through trustworthy behaviour. Trust is what you earn when you don't renege on a written promise – to talk at Albisgüetli, for example. Trust is what you earn with clear programmes, but certainly not with **contradictions and deceitful talk**.

Those who are still committed to Switzerland, those who want a credible foreign policy, a foreign policy that makes it clear to people at home and abroad where they stand, should vote SVP in 2003!

²² SF DRS, 13.5.2000.

²³ Facts, 31.5.2000.

²⁴ CVP fraction leader Jean-Philippe Maître in 'Blick', 22.5.2000.

²⁵ Federal Councillor Joseph Deiss' comment on the result to SF DRS on the actual Sunday of the vote (4.3.2001).

VI. The outcome of policy on asylum and foreigners: empty promises – overflowing asylum centres

For over 15 years, **the SVP has been fighting against the wrong policies on asylum and foreigners.** And as the government in Berne regularly ignored our objections, the SVP filed a **petition** in 1991, signed by over 100,000 citizens in the briefest period.²⁶

When this petition, too, was not taken seriously in parliament, the SVP reacted with **two people's initiatives.** As usual, however, the prevailing political class soothed the electorate with empty promises.

In 1993, the Federal Council protested:

"We will definitely uphold the principle of a balanced relationship between Swiss and foreign residents."²⁷

In 1994, the then Director of the Federal Office for Refugees made the following reaffirmation in connection with one of the numerous amendments to the Asylum Act:

"Drug-dealing asylum-seekers will be affected by our new law and will disappear."²⁸

In 1996 the Federal Council again protested:

"We have significantly reduced the number of instances of abuse."²⁹

In 1998, Federal President Arnold Koller declared at the Albisgüetli Conference:

"We have the asylum process under control."

²⁶ "Asylum rights in Switzerland are exploited shamelessly. Only about 4% are genuine refugees. And we shall continue to protect those refugees in the future. The overwhelming majority, however, are immigrants who want to earn money here. Most of them enter Switzerland illegally and then live at our cost. That is why the SVP submitted a petition to the Federal Council, demanding strict compliance with the law. Over 100,000 signed the petition. But neither the Federal Council nor the parliament has done much about it yet. Which is why the SVP is now launching an Initiative against illegal immigration." SVP publicity in the 'NZZ', 9.10.1991.

²⁷ CVP Federal Councillor Arnold Koller in 'Die Weltwoche', 28.10.1993.

²⁸ 'Sonntagsblick', 17.04.1994.

In autumn 1998, a CVP spokesman in the National Council tried to pull the wool over Swiss voters' eyes by claiming:

"The Federal Council, cantons and communes have all done excellent work in dealing with the asylum process so far."³⁰

A 2001 round table agreement specified a **cost ceiling of 1 billion francs per year** for asylum matters. Today, however, including all related costs, the government, cantons and communes spend **over 2 billion francs a year** on asylum matters.³¹

In July 2001, the Director of the Federal Office for Refugees confidently declared:

"The refugee problem has now largely been solved."³²

A large **majority of the cantons and almost 50% of the electorate** lost confidence in these protestations on 24 November 2002. **The SVP Asylum Initiative** was rejected by just 3,000 votes. And how did our CVP Minister of Justice, Ruth Metzler, comment on the result? Her cry was:

"Super!"³³

And there you see just how little it takes to make Mrs Metzler happy.

But how do asylum affairs really look in 2003? Are they really so good that you can walk through the corridors of parliament shouting *"Super!"*?

90 to 95% of all requests for asylum are rejected. The large majority of asylum seekers are **not refugees**, they are **asylum tourists**. Most enter Switzerland illegally. Over 70% of rejected applicants simply go to ground. **The drug-dealing scene is controlled by gangs of asylum-seekers.**

Those who finally want to put a stop to asylum abuse, who have had enough of empty promises, enough of overflowing asylum centres, enough of an asylum policy that costs two billion francs a year, have to vote SVP in 2003!

²⁹ CVP Fed. Councillor Arnold Koller in the 'Tages Anzeiger', 19.10.1996.

³⁰ Motion by CVP National Councillor Josef Leu, 9.10.1998.

³¹ 'Die Weltwoche', 24.10.2002.

³² Jean-Daniel Gerber in 'Die Weltwoche', 6.7.2001.

³³ Facts, 28.11.2002.

VII. The lack of ideas, action, leaders and competence

Whether with regard to **finances, taxes, foreign policy, Swiss policy vis-à-vis foreigners, social and health policies**: the results achieved by the SP – FDP – CVP coalition are utterly miserable. This alliance of failures is incapable of solving the big problems facing us in the future. Switzerland will get nowhere without clear goals and concepts.

And so our political leaders merely decide and announce what will be well received at the time, what will allow them to survive politically over the next few days. The result is a huge mass of contradictions. It's impossible to get anything done like that. Impossible to either lead or govern. What we have is a **coalition of politicians with no ideas**. This lack of any programme was never clearer than in all the interviews which Federal President Pascal Couchepin published around the New Year. The only specific "reform" announced by the new Minister of Health was that he no longer wanted to announce future increases in health insurance premiums himself, but would be leaving this to the health insurance funds ... I'm sure premium payers will really love Couchepin reforms like those!³⁴

The SP-FDP-CVP Centre-Left coalition has

- **no goal,**
- **no itinerary,**
- **no concept,**
- **no strategy,**
- **no staying power,**
- **and no solutions.**

The SVP is the only force in the country prepared to battle against this ruinous lack of direction. Those who want solutions, concepts and vigorous action will vote SVP in 2003.

VIII. "It's beginning to dawn....."

2003 is an election year and I believe people are starting to see the light. Those who look beyond the depths of high politics and out towards the country

³⁴ 'SonntagsZeitung', 29.12.2002.

and our people, the sovereign people, will be filled with a sense of new hope. And so, dear citizens, I call on you to wake up in this election year 2003! 2002 was not only a bad year economically, it was also an important year of clarification in many aspects:

- Management practices aimed at **size and growth** alone, **balance-sheet cheating, the wrong ideas about globalisation and internationalisation, much that is hollow and empty has been exposed**. That is a good sign. **It is the beginning of a turnaround. In the economy at least, there is light at the end of the tunnel**. Here we are seeing a return to Swiss values, Swiss quality.
- **Bungling Boards of Directors** where incompetence and nepotism were rife, burst last year like **plague spots**. As did so many unhealthy entanglements between the Boards of Directors of different firms. **The fact that all this has been exposed marks the beginning of a change for the better**.
- In the world of business, managers who get things wrong are replaced much quicker than in the world of politics because companies that perform badly cannot survive in today's markets. Politics is a different ball game. In politics, **incompetence, outmoded structures and deplorable states of affairs** can survive for long periods because they are kept alive artificially with **state infusions**, i.e. **tax revenues**.
- In **society**, too, there seems to be a growing agreement on the need to **separate the wheat from the chaff**.
- More and more people in Switzerland no longer allow themselves to be intimidated by the so-called upholders of moral stands in the press and politics, in whose opinion criticism is bad style. **More and more people want to think through all the options themselves, they want to weigh up the pros and cons in a down-to-earth way, and, above all, they want to place what is best for Switzerland at the forefront of their reflections**.
- The **umbrella organisation of the Swiss economy, "Economiesuisse"** has also become more courageous:

"Membership of the EU is not of any interest at the moment from an economic point of view. [...] Now that the Bilateral Agreements I have come into force, there is less urgency for Switzerland to join the EU for economic reasons than before. On the contrary: our own investigations

show that accepting the 'Acquis communautaire' would have a negative impact on the economy in some areas."³⁵

- Jean-Christian Lambelet, Professor of Economics, said on 5 January 2003 in the "NZZ am Sonntag":

"The EU as it is today is not a very appetising proposal. [...] There is less and less respect for smaller countries. In the meantime, the larger members have begun to play power politics."

- Karl Otto Pöhl, president of the German Federal Bank from 1980 to 1993, a German who now lives in Switzerland and has been a member of the SPD for many years, believes:

*"that Switzerland should try to go its own way without becoming a member of the EU. Europe needs something like Switzerland."*³⁶

- But the biggest ray of hope was the massive **rejection of the "EU Membership Initiative"** on 4 March 2001, when 76.8% voted No.

- A comment by the president of Switzerland's biggest bank also shows just how quickly the climate has changed – except in parliament, of course. Three weeks ago, **Marcel Ospel** declared:

*"I am outraged at the way the EU treats its smaller members. They constantly find themselves manoeuvred up against the wall by the two or three big members. I am more sceptical today than ever."*³⁷

And in response to the question of whether the Federal Council's EU-accession application should be withdrawn, the same person replied:

*"Yes."*³⁸

Ten years ago, the same bank threw me off the Board of Directors because I was opposed to membership of the EEA/EU! How times change.

³⁵ Source: 'Economiesuisse', Review of Swiss Integration Policy, point 2, October 2002.

³⁶ 'Bilanz', 1.9.2002. Neither does Karl Otto Pöhl believe that Switzerland should join the EU for economic reasons.

³⁷ Cash 52/1, 27.12.2002.

³⁸ Cash 52/1, 27.12.2002.

So you see, ladies and gentlemen: **"The light is beginning to dawn!"** In the economy and society at large, and amongst people with a realistic outlook, the light is beginning to dawn. Not so **in parliament**, however, where they still **slumber on in the dark of the night**. Let's wake them up with the 2003 elections!

But there are rays of light even in the midst of so many problems. The biggest ray of light is that happily, **our citizens have an alternative. The SVP**. The SVP has had no part in the political and economic blunders of the past ten years. Which is why the SVP is so credible today. It has held good against all attacks. Even in the past, when the party stood alone in offering courageous resistance.

The SVP was a **voice in the wilderness**, determined to raise objections and present alternative solutions. For which it was roundly rubbished almost daily. But we remained **steadfast** and are now the largest party in Switzerland. Even though not all SVP representatives had the force to stand with us, to pursue the same route... **But the clear majority of the party** has always been prepared to shoulder this difficult but very responsible task.

Which is why the SVP has become a credible alternative. That is why the SVP can look forward to the 2003 elections with a clear conscience.

The rather comforting view I hold with respect to my company is equally applicable to our party. We need not be the absolute best and cleverest. **We simply have to be better and cleverer than the others.**

One day, an SP man, a CVP man, an FDP man and an SVP man were wandering through the steppe. Suddenly they came face to face with a growling, hungry lion.

The SP man shouts: "I'm a good, social, morally upstanding person and have always handed out money from the state coffers. You should eat the unmoral SVP man instead!"

The CVP man pleads: "I'm neither fish nor bird, have always been discreet and am much too wet and soppy for you, lion. You should eat the fiery SVP man instead!"

The FDP man says in a lordly voice: "We of the FDP sit on so many Boards of Directors – quietly and silently – he certainly won't dare to eat me. There – lion – eat the SVP man, no one'll help him!"

In the meantime, **the SVP man** had unpacked his rucksack and put on a pair of trainers. As soon as the others noticed this they all shouted: "Are you mad? Do you really think that'll make you faster than the lion?" To which the SVP man calmly replied: "I don't have to be. I just have to be faster than you!"

Ladies and Gentlemen, **there is only one answer to the lack of ideas, the lack of solutions, the lack of leaders, the aimlessness and lack of direction, the lack of steadfastness, the lack of courage to stand up as a positive exception:**

The SVP!