



LIBERALES INSTITUT

Laudatory speech at the Award Ceremony of the Liberal Institute

**Javier Milei
President of Argentina**

from January 24, 2025, in Kloten

Dear guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

The first time I heard from Javier Milei was in September 2023 - around a year and a half ago. At the time, he was just one of several candidates for the presidency in Argentina.

The American journalist Tucker Carlson did an interview with him in Buenos Aires that lasted around half an hour. I was enthusiastic from the start. Milei talked about Mises, Hayek and many other great liberal economists.

The interview with Javier Milei broke all records. Over 400 million people watched the interview conducted by Milei in Spanish on social media.

This demonstrates not only the significant appeal of this unusual man, but also the great appeal of liberal ideas.

Of course, the experience described by economist Philipp Bagus in his excellent book about Milei is also very impressive. He reports how he observed a saleswoman in Madrid at the kiosk listening to podcasts with Milei - a kiosk

saleswomen in Spain who is interested in liberal economic theory and liberal economists!

I have been saying for a long time:

Nothing is easier than selling liberal ideas. Liberalism means freedom, individuality, personal responsibility and independence. What do people want other than these values? What else constitutes being human?

Freedom is the antithesis of oppression, restriction, command and obedience. The market economy is the economic system that rewards serving people and fulfilling the needs of others. Whoever creates better and cheaper products and services wins.

We liberals have it really easy in our arguments - liberal structures are not only more humane, they are also better. Economically, but above all morally.

Like Switzerland, Argentina was given a very liberal constitution in the middle of the 19th century, in 1853. This liberal system led to great prosperity in Argentina within a few decades. At the beginning of the 20th century, Argentina was richer than all continental European countries.

But then the economic decline began. The ideas of collectivism and statism ate away at the country for decades. Poverty spread through the formerly rich country because politicians followed false prophets.

Wilhelm Röpke, in whose name we are awarding the prize today, was a strong voice against collectivism in the 20th century. Collectivism refers to all forms of socialism - a form of government that is on the group, the collective, and not on the individual.

Wilhelm Röpke was an insistent admonisher - in Switzerland and in Europe - against all totalitarian tendencies. He repeatedly pointed out that collectivism leads to an extreme expansion of the powers and authority of the state.

He resolutely and pointedly opposed to all varieties of socialism, red and brown. And unmasked their authoritarian airs and graces. According to Röpke, a planned economy is always totalitarian because the "executioner" ultimately sets the tone in such an economic system.

This is exactly the kind of development that has taken place in Argentina over the last 90 years or so - from one government to the next.

And then came Javier Milei - and set a radical counterpoint.

Milei speaks of the power of the consumer instead of the power of the state-controlled economy. He postulates the rights of individual citizens instead of the rights of bureaucracies. He abolishes a large number of ministries. And he wants to be measured by the number of laws and regulations he abolishes.

Milei is also fighting very successfully against inflation, which is eating away at people's assets. Hope is spreading in Argentina - especially among the poor and young people. These are the groups that supported him the most during his great election success.

Javier Milei is changing the country by leaps and bounds. And he is doing so with the recipes of the great liberal economists and philosophers

In almost every speech or discussion on television, he refers to Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich von Hayek, Murray

Rothbard, Ayn Rand, Milton Friedman or other liberal thinkers.

No other contemporary politician has contributed more to the spread of the ideas of classical liberalism. Anyone who watches his interviews and speeches will see how competently and coherently he argues. Milei does so with a high level of expertise, vivid language and great powers of persuasion.

Without a large party and almost no financial resources, he was able to win over a clear majority of the Argentinean population just over a year ago. He achieved this with the power of ideas and the power of arguments - with imagination, creativity, courage and an unshakeable faith.

Liberalism is alive and well - not only in Argentina, but also in our country. Liberal principles are not outdated. We in Switzerland also need deregulation and a reduction in bureaucracy. The state has become too big, too powerful, too all-encompassing.

There are many areas in which it should not actually interfere. Freedom, responsibility and voluntary solidarity should be the guiding principles of our lives, not official measures and bans. We must also measure politicians by how many laws they abolish.

At the Liberal Institute, we have been postulating liberal thinkers for a long time - ever since our foundation in 1979, 45 years ago. We also do this as part of the Liberty Summer School, which many young people attend every year.

Wilhelm Röpke, Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich von Hayek, Karl Popper - they and other liberal thinkers are and remain a great inspiration for us and the world.

Their works were written in times of rampant collectivism. At the time, they were the intellectual defenders of freedom. And they did not postulate egoism, but a combination of individualism and altruism.

The freedom movement is alive, in Argentina as well as in Switzerland. And freedom will win, we will win - Viva la libertad, carajo!

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