



UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND

The Renewal of Culture

The Relevance of the Conservative-Liberal Political Tradition

Professor Hannes H. Gissurarson

New Direction and Centre for the Renewal of Culture

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Hannes H. Gissurarson

Twenty-Four Conservative-Liberal Thinkers

Part I



New
Direction

Hannes H. Gissurarson **TWENTY-FOUR CONSERVATIVE-LIBERAL THINKERS** Part I

Hannes H. Gissurarson **TWENTY-FOUR CONSERVATIVE-LIBERAL THINKERS** Part II



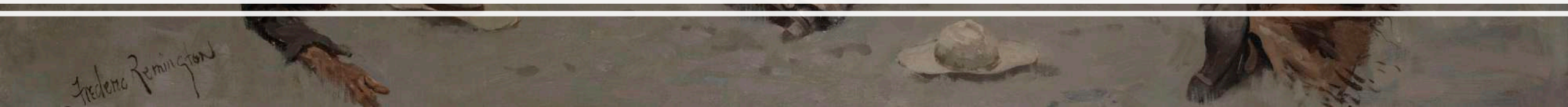
Pre-modern Insights: Snorri and Aquinas

- Both: The king is under the same law as his subjects
- If he seriously violates the law, he could be replaced
- Snorri described the individual, making choices
- Aquinas justified private property: brings peace and prosperity
- Aquinas also tolerated sinners without approving of them





What happens without property rights?





The Classical Thinkers: Locke, Hume, Smith

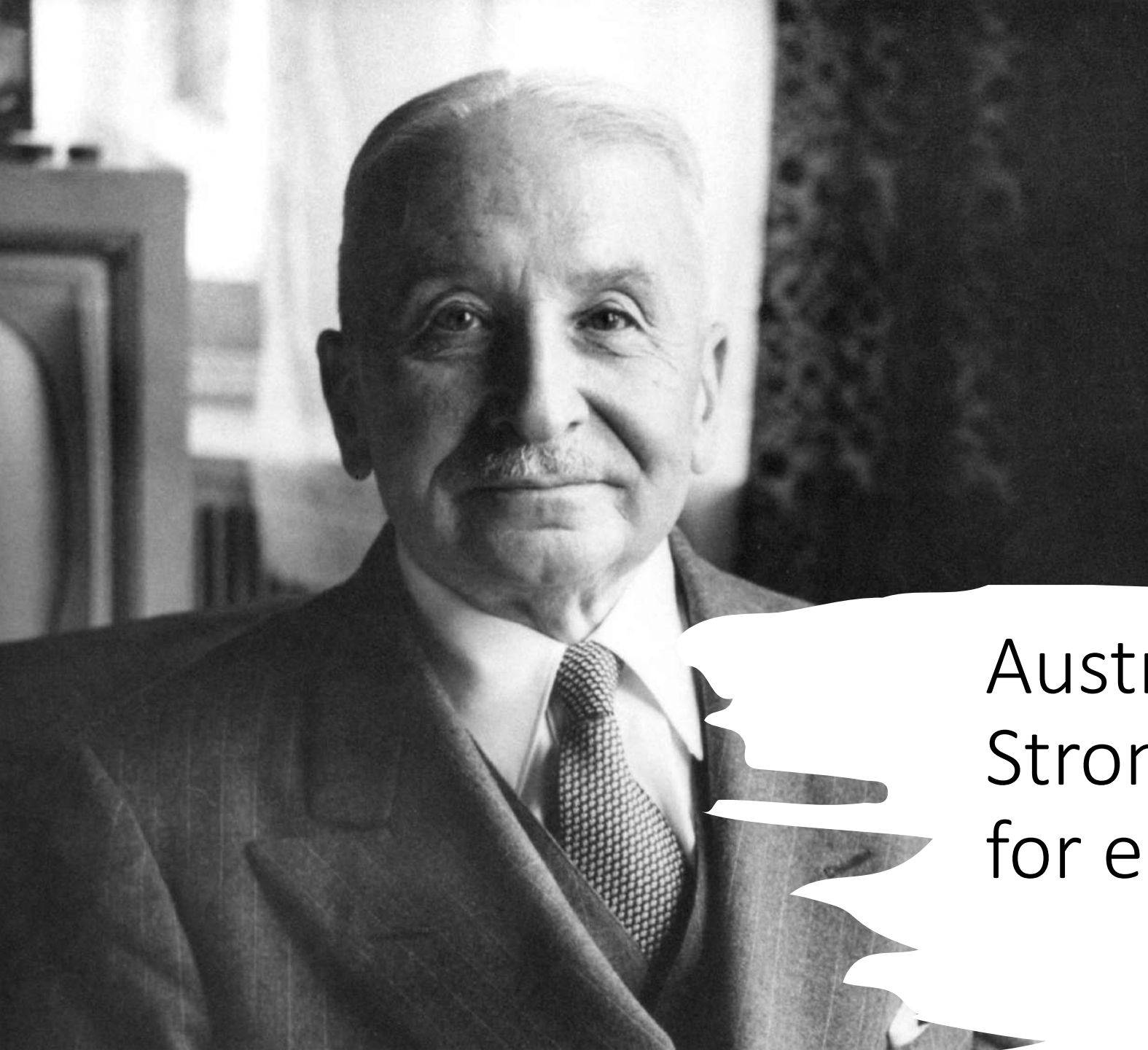
- Locke: Appropriation from commons need not harm others
- Hume: Private property and free trade responses to scarcity
- Smith: order without commands, unintended consequences



Free trade Champions: Chydenius, Bastiat, Spencer, Sumner

Trade the Key to Prosperity





Austrian economics:
Strongest arguments
for economic freedom

The Economics of Freedom

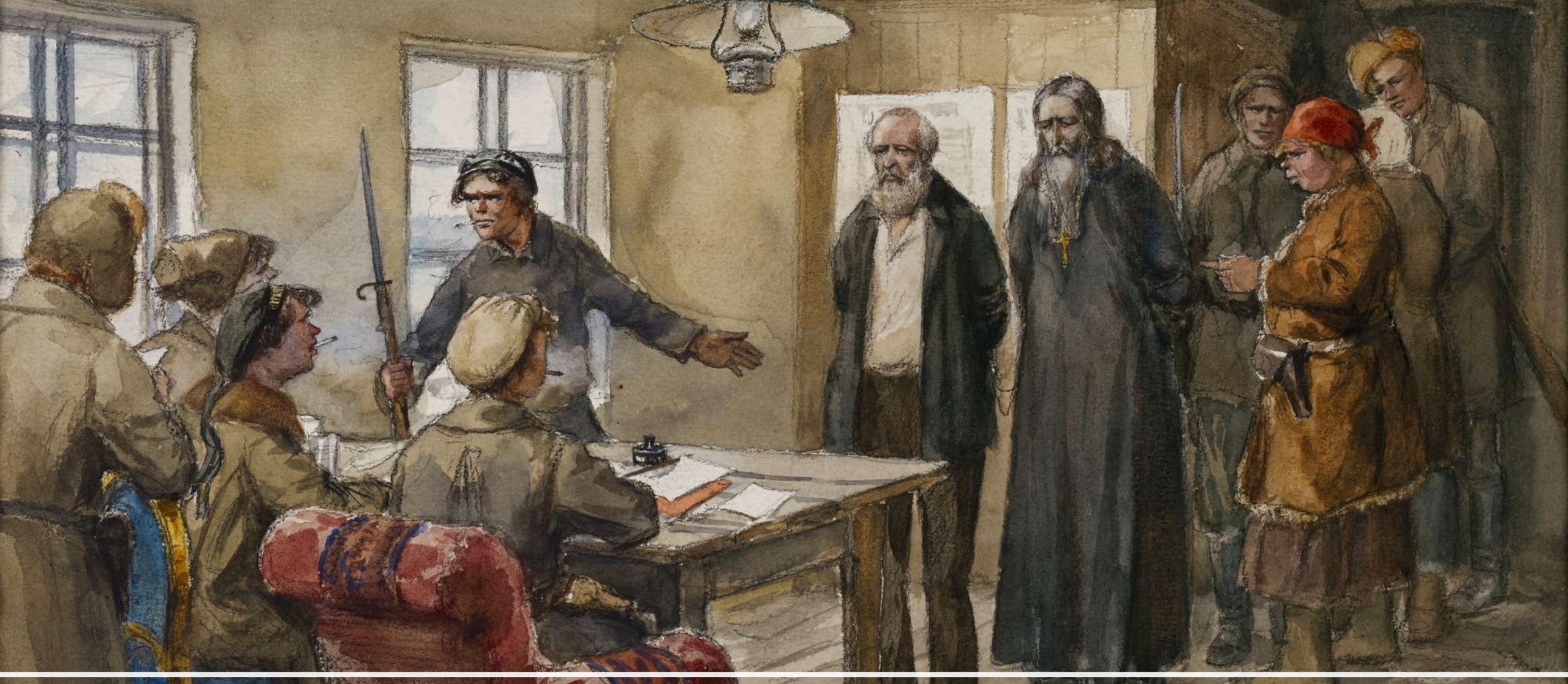
- Menger solved the problem of price, showed that it is subjective, depends on consumer preferences, not producer costs; new bread more valuable than old bread, old wine more valuable than new wine
- Refuted both Georgism and Marxism: nothing special about land or labour
- Mises demonstrated the impossibility of socialism as the public ownership of the means of production
- Socialism as central planning had to fail; Lenin and other Marxists had no idea what to do, how to decide between alternative uses of resources and tools
- Interventionism was not a stable situation, either: one measure required another



Café Landtmann, Vienna November 1918

- Weber: 'The Bolshevik Revolution will end in a catastrophe.'
- Schumpeter: 'But it would be a good laboratory to test our theories.'
- Weber: 'A laboratory heaped with corpses!'
- Schumpeter: 'Every anatomy classroom is the same thing.'
- Weber: 'This is intolerable!'
- Schumpeter: 'How can somebody carry on like that in a coffeehouse?'





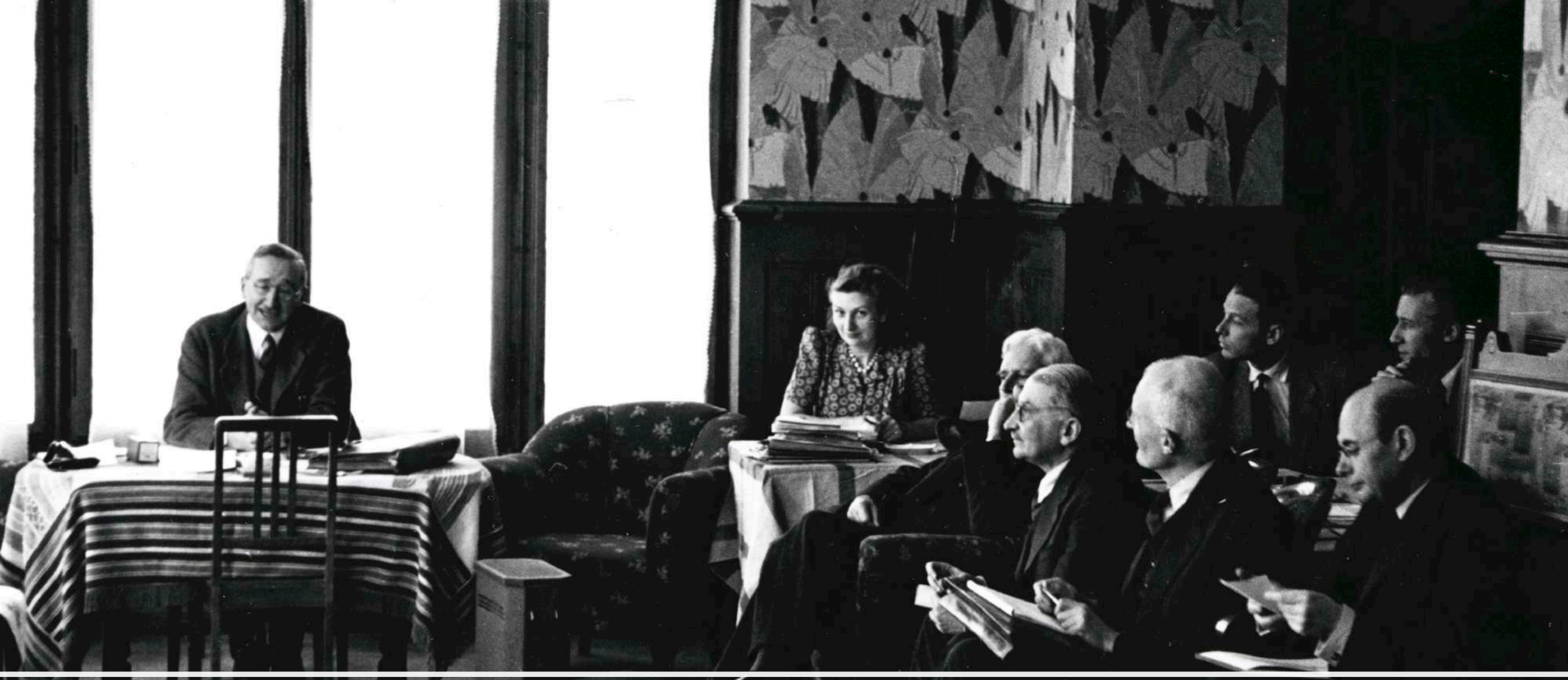
Hayek: Socialism 'The Road to Serfdom'



Hayek as a Conservative Liberal

- How can we accomplish so much when we know so little?
- Because we can utilise knowledge of others transmitted through the price mechanism and through traditions and practices
- Collective reason, accumulated cultural capital
- Theory of spontaneous order shows that liberty is possible and indeed inevitable





Crucial Role of Mont Pelerin Society





Three who
Made a
Difference

Conservative Liberalism as a Political Project

- Resurrection of Germany after WW2 organised by conservatives and liberals, Adenauer and Erhard (MPS member)
- Resurrection of Italy organised also by conservatives and liberals, de Gasperi and Einaudi (MPS member)
- In 1980s, Hayek's and Friedman's political programme successfully implemented by Conservatives in the UK, a military junta in Chile, and social democrats in New Zealand
- Nordic countries successful despite, and not because of, social democracy; Sweden had to retreat from socialism in early 1990s
- Successful reformers: Mart Laar in Estonia, Vaclav Klaus in Czech Republic, and many others



Hayek's Advice

Poverty and Environmental Protection

- Difference between Rawls and Piketty: Rawls worried about the poor, Piketty about the rich
- But poverty is a problem, not wealth (unless you are envious)
- Remarkable fact: The average income of the 10% poorest in the freest one-fourth of economies HIGHER than the average income of all in the unfreest one-fourth
- Why are elephants and rhinos endangered species but not sheep in Iceland or Croatia? Because sheep are owned, and ownership creates responsibility
- Green capitalism: how to protect the environment by creating private property rights



Poachers
into
gamekeepers



Icelandic Fisheries: Sustainable and Profitable

Nationalism, Good and Bad

- *Good*, natural, non-aggressive nationalism regards the nation, and the nation state, as daily plebiscite (Ernest Renan), based on national consciousness and acceptance of national values
- Reaffirmation of national identity, the collective will to preserve and develop traditions, usually based on shared history, common language and literary heritage, respecting a similar will of other peoples and nations
- *Bad*, manufactured, aggressive nationalism not about belonging oneself, but about belittling others, false feeling of superiority, urge to dominate, subdue, humiliate others
- Bad nationalism based on conquest



Revanchism, Chauvinism, Jingoism

Economics is Not Enough

If we are conservatives, we need to know that is worth conserving: it is individuality, the will and ability to make choices

A half-truth that economic freedom erodes traditional values and communities, because it creates new values and communities, new ties and attachments

Economic freedom therefore essential: the only remedy for freedom is more freedom

But we also need stability, continuity, security, identity, and this can only be accomplished by the renewal of culture

