



Wilhelm Röpke

(* 1899 Schwarmstedt (Lower Saxony) –
† 1966 Geneva)

Wilhelm Röpke, as his companions Walter Eucken, Franz Böhm and Alexander Rüstow e.g., was one of the intellectual fathers of the German Market Economy, implemented by Ludwig Erhard as “Social Market Economy”. Although always an enemy of being put in any Procrustean box, he was proud to be called a “great Austrian economist” inter-nationally, in the tradition of Ludwig von Mises. In Germany, champions of the Market Economy as Röpke were called “Neoliberals” or “Ordoliberal”, summarized in Röpke’s own words: “I champion an economic order ruled by free prices and markets ... the only economic order compatible with human freedom.” Röpke was an outstanding example of personal courage in fighting National Socialists and any kind of collectivism, a brilliant analyst of the complex economic and social crises of his times, and a political man of foresight. In 1930 e.g., before the elections to the Reichstag, he warned: “Nobody who votes National Socialists on September 14 may tell later on that he had not known what could be the

result. He must know that he votes for chaos instead of order, destruction instead of building up ... for war inwards and outwards”. Röpke not only was an excellent expert in trade - cycle theory e.g., in the tradition of monetary and capital theories of Mises, Böhm-Bawerk and Hayek, he also advised the German Government on practical means to overcome depression and unemployment in the Brauns-Commission (1930-1931) long before the “General Theory” of Keynes (1936). For his uncompromising opposition to the Nazis he had to leave his homeland in 1933, first to Istanbul, then in 1937 to the Institute of International Studies in Geneva. Röpke’s great reputation with Chancellor Adenauer helped Ludwig Erhard to implement the German Market Economy against socialists in all parties; inter-nationally he paved the diplomatic way for Germany’s come back: morally and economically. As a founding member of Hayeks Mont Pelerin Society (1947) and as a free trader, Röpke was convinced that freedom, peace and wealth are promoted best by competition on open markets, rule of law, private property, stable money, and a federal system as in Switzerland - nationally and internationally: people living peacefully together in all their rich variety of culture and religion, in a social system of freedom and self-responsibility.

Literature:

- Wilhelm Röpke, *Is the German Policy the Right One? (Evidence for Chancellor Adenauer 1950)*, in: *Standard Texts on the Social Market Economy*, Gustav Fischer, New York 1982.
- Wilhelm Röpke, *International Order and Economic Integration*, Dordrecht, Holland 1959.
- Website: www.mises.org/roepke

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