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## Preface in Newman

Erich Fromm  
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The West, in participating in the nuclear armament race, is willing to risk nuclear war for the sake of freedom of thought and of speech, and the right of political activity for everybody, including the opposition, and for a government based on general and free elections; these features are part of the Western system while they do not exist in the Soviet states, nor, for that matter, in some states which are allied with us. Quite aside from the question whether there is a realistic threat to our way of life from the Soviet Union, and whether the general destruction caused by a nuclear war will save freedom and democracy in the United States or anywhere else, it is important to examine another problem: that of the difference between *having* the right to think, to speak and be active politically, and *making use* of this right. In the Western countries the opposition *has the rights* we are willing to fight for, but what use does it make of them?

So far as freedom of thought is concerned, one would expect that the use of this right would result in a great variety of views on political subjects. The fact, however, is that there is a conformity of thought which is only a little less complete than the conformity which is enforced by the Soviet system. Many who have visited the Soviet Union report their surprise that almost everyone asks the same questions about the United States: Why is there lynching in the South? Why do we have to surround the Soviet Union with military bases? and so on. What the travelers seem to forget is that the picture held in the West of the Soviet Union is equally full of clichés. Khrushchev is a blend of Lenin and Peter the Great, he is {08} resolved to conquer the free world by force or by trickery, and so on. Of course, confronted with the similarity of these reactions, most people will answer that the two are quite different, for the simple reason that the Russian clichés are wrong and distorted, while ours are true. But, after all, there *are* a few voices of dissent in the United States, some of them widely published, like Walter Lippmann's, which demonstrate not only that our uniformity is not total but also that the clichés cannot be explained by the statement that they are indisputably true. Furthermore, there is the interesting fact that those who are most violent in their attacks against the lack of freedom in Russia are the very ones who are the most faithful believers in the clichés here, and that those who make use of the freedom to think for themselves are, on the whole, most in favor of negotiation and peace.



As far as political freedom and democratic procedure are concerned, Americans do not make full use of their rights. I am not speaking primarily of the fact that in hardly any country with free elections is the proportion of nonvoters as high as it is in the United States, although this in itself is a significant fact. I am rather speaking of the fact that people leave decisions to those on top, and feel little of the democratic responsibility of each citizen to be well informed, to think, and to let his voice be heard. We have little well-reasoned public opinion in matters of politics, especially in matters of foreign policy. Here, too, there are exceptions. Letters to important newspapers often express dissenting opinions; so do letters to the President, to his advisers, or to members of Congress. There are recent movements on the part of a number of private citizens which express dissenting views on our nuclear and foreign policies, expressed in newspaper ads, meetings and other means of communication. Characteristic of such groups are the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy and the Committees of Correspondence and their newsletter. Yet these dissenting voices are those of a relatively small number of individuals.

What are the reasons behind this uniformity of thought and {09} general conformism? I believe they lie in a general lack of courage, of imagination and of independence. Courage is now a much discussed concept. We are persuaded that we should be willing to accept not only our own death, but the destruction of our children, grandchildren and of half to almost the whole of our population; that we should take the responsibility for destroying the wives and children of our enemies and of neutrals for the sake of our ideals. While it is absurd, of course, to assume that by means of nuclear war freedom and democracy can be saved, we find here a strange paradox. In our daily life there are only a few people who will risk even their jobs for the sake of their convictions; most people do not even dare to think something that could put them into trouble. How can we expect that they should be able to make the ethical decision to die rather than to "be slaves"? Furthermore, an ethical decision can only be made by a person privately, and never by millions who have been made drunk by the passions of hate and fear. In all wars both belligerent sides are persuaded that they are fighting for God, for justice, for freedom--but this is the big lie behind wars. They are fought because people are afraid to protest, to think and to judge for themselves, perhaps also because they are so bored with life that even war has its attractions.

Indeed, there is nothing wrong with our values of freedom, independence, integrity, courage. What is wrong is that we do not practice them in peacetime, but use them as slogans for the preparation of wars. Those who are serious about these values propose that not only charity begins at home, but also freedom, independence and courage. Nuclear bombs may destroy the Soviets and ourselves, but they will not save freedom. But the practice of freedom and of courage and of reason in our daily life might save us, it might even eventually win the world over to our ideas.

Why do I write the foregoing remarks as a preface to Mr. Newman's book? For a simple reason, which will strike the reader when he reads the following pages. Mr. Newman is one of those who do practice independence and courage, and, in addition, he has {10} wisdom and imagination. His letters to newspapers and his book reviews are among the most encouraging signs on the contemporary scene. Here is a man who is not afraid to say what he sees, and who is capable of seeing what exists. He does not dwell on the surface of things but goes to their very center. There is none of the double



talk or "double think" customary in most political discussions; there is a straight, direct approach to the facts of our political life. And there is something else: *human passion*--though human passion is considered today old-fashioned and in contrast to correct thought.

In reading about the trial of Eichmann I felt that he was in many ways a symbol of the modern mass-man and of his moral dilemma. Eichmann was a bureaucrat, a cog in a big machine. He claims to have been a small cog, but even if he had been a bigger one, he was still a cog and not a man. He killed men as he would have killed cattle, but if his task had been to ship tons of coal he would not have felt differently about it than he felt about shipping millions of human beings. What mattered to him was the organization, the proper functioning within this organization, and his prestige--that of being a valuable cog.

The moral problem of mankind in all past history has been the problem of good and evil. Some philosophies and religions have stressed good, others have stressed evil, most have seen the conflict between the two forces; but whatever one's view on the relative weight of good and evil in the human soul, evil is as human as good is human, and hence we can say that even the most evil man is not outside of humanity. Modern mass society has created a new problem, no longer that of evil, but that of a new inhumanity--the inhumanity of the *robot*, of a man transformed into a thing, of a man who does not feel because he has been transformed into a thing, of men administering other men as if *they* were things, and being administered by others who are subject to the same laws of the organization. The problem our modern society has raised is (and this is the problem in the capitalist society of the West as well {11} as in the so-called communist society in Soviet Russia) that a man who has become fully adapted to society is at the same time an inhuman man. Am I exaggerating in calling Eichmann a symbol of the trend of the time? I do not think so, in view of the way the governments of big industrial states play with nuclear bombs and calmly discuss the destruction of half, if not of all, the world. When you hear the views of "experts" who say that the immediate death of half the population of a big country is still acceptable (acceptable to whom? to the dead or to the living?), when you hear it said that after the catastrophe of an atomic war and the destruction of half the world, life will go on as before and people will enjoy their cars and refrigerators, then, indeed, you ask yourself whether this world has not been seized by a general madness, and whether what we are witnessing is not the emergence of the healthy automaton who is at the same time a very sick individual.

Mr. Newman writes with passion--because he writes as a man, neither as a slave nor as an automaton. These short pieces are not only stimulating in themselves; they should also give an example of what freedom, independence and courage really mean in a free society. I hope that many readers will be tempted to follow this example.