



Second Preface in *May Man Prevail*

Erich Fromm
(1964b-e)

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This book was written between the last months of 1960 and the late spring of 1961. In the almost two years that have passed since then, many important political events have occurred, and it seems justified to examine to what extent these events have confirmed or refuted the main theses of the book.

The point that seems to have been refuted is an assumption I made about Cuba. I wrote: „Khrushchev’s main aim is the ending of the cold war with the United States, and he knows that this would be impossible if he built a political, not to say military, base against the United States.” (Pp. 245-46) The fact is that Khrushchev tried to build a missile base in Cuba in September-October 3.1962, and withdrew his missiles and bombers only when President Kennedy threatened retaliatory measures, at the same time promising not to invade Cuba if the missiles were withdrawn.

Let it be said first that the second part of my assumption has proven to be correct. Not only did Khrushchev withdraw his missiles and bombers immediately, but he also continued to demonstrate in other ways his determination to arrive at an understanding with the United States. He did not conclude a peace treaty with East Germany, he even declared that the peace treaty and the neutralization of Berlin were not urgent; he furthermore made important concessions in the matter of the test ban by accepting the principle of admitting non-Russian inspectors on Soviet soil. All his actions show the continuation of his {X} will to arrive at an understanding with the United States, and thus confirm one of the main theses of this book.

And yet why did he bring missiles into Cuba if he wants an understanding with the United States? There is perhaps no political action in recent years that has been as puzzling as this one. There are any number of theories that try to explain Khrushchev’s action. One is the assumption that he foresaw that his withdrawal of the missiles would create a better atmosphere--in other words, that he divined the later events beforehand. This theory attributes more wisdom to Mr. Khrushchev than seems likely. Another theory is that he wanted to provoke the United States into an attack against Cuba (which would have put the United States militarily and morally in a tight spot, and would have relieved the Soviet Union from its responsibility for Cuba) but withdrew when instead of attacking Cuba the United States interfered with his shipping, and war between the



United States and the Soviet Union became likely. Another assumption is that he wanted to be in a better strategic position, considering the nuclear superiority of the United States, especially when it came to a show down about Berlin. Still another assumption is that in view of the United States refusal to make any concession about West Berlin, he felt he had to recoup his prestige by a bold action (under pressure from his generals, perhaps). Still another theory assumes that he intended the withdrawal of the missiles as a bargaining point in the Berlin question; the United States would make a concession in Berlin as a *quid pro quo* for the withdrawal. Khrushchev's own explanation, that he put the missiles in Cuba as a deterrence against American attack on Cuba, is the least plausible one, since, considering President Kennedy's declaration in September, Khrushchev, by his action, was provoking an attack rather than averting it, especially since he did not even try to keep the installation of the missiles a secret. As far as I can see, none of these explanations is entirely convincing; the only thing that seems to be certain is that Khrushchev's action was a {XI} considerable blunder. It is true that my statement that he would not transform Cuba into a missile base was erroneous (an error, incidentally, that I apparently shared with many departments in the executive branch). But the Russian missiles in Cuba do not alter the fact that Khrushchev did not change his course of wanting to arrive at an understanding with the United States. His withdrawal and subsequent policy mentioned above show that clearly.

As far as the statements made about Castro are concerned, I have no corrections to make. I wrote: „The Cuban revolution was neither instigated by Moscow nor by the Cuban Communists, who had been collaborating with Batista until his downfall was near. Castro was never a Communist, but he planned a revolution which transcended the purely political limits of freeing the country from dictatorship. He started a social revolution, expropriating land owners and industry. United States government and public opinion started to turn against him, and forced Castro step by step to seek help, economically and politically, from the Soviet Union and to accept the help of the Cuban Communist Party which had been held in contempt by the Castristas because of its obvious opportunism and corruption.“ (P. 115) All this is as true today as it was two years ago. There was a highly disputed report published in the United States that had Castro saying he had always been a Marxist-Leninist. If he did say this, it was sheer bragging, with the obvious aim of proving that the Communists have no superiority over him, since, according to all that is known, Castro had little idea of Marxism and Leninism, although he did have a plan, as indicated in the text quoted above, for a social revolution. By now he can be called a Communist, and unfortunately Cuba has become a police state; the latter, however, may be less attributable to directives from Moscow than to the continuing violent actions aimed at the overthrow of the government, largely supported by the United States and the anti-Castro refugees. But Castro is under the discipline of neither Moscow nor Peking. He is a „Castrista“ {XII} Communist, who will determine his own policy within the marginal freedom of action left to him by the big powers. He might even try to play Moscow against Peking (and against Washington) in order to increase this margin. In fact, his attempts to arrive at a peaceful solution with the United States have been rejected by Washington. He has asserted the authority of the Castristas and repudiated the attempts of some Communist party leaders to achieve dominance. His fear of American direct and indirect aggression as well as the contempt shown him by Khrushchev in the missile crisis have both probably made him feel more



sympathetic toward the Chinese who have supported him ideologically against Khrushchev all the way. But economically and militarily they can help him little, and he is forced to lean on Soviet support if he wants to survive. Actually he has maintained a position of neutrality in the Soviet-Chinese conflict. No doubt Castro is and was a social revolutionary, but the Cuban revolution has remained his revolution, neither controlled by, nor patterned along the lines of, the bureaucratic Soviet system. I still believe, as I did when this book was written, that he would not have become such a close ally of the Soviet Union had we not cut him off from all vital means for survival.

I want to point out, with some satisfaction, that the main theses of the book have not only not been contradicted, but have been confirmed by the events of the last two years. This holds true mainly in the following respects:

1) Khrushchev's wish for coexistence has been clearly indicated not only in his various speeches, but in the fact, mentioned above, that he has not gone ahead with the German peace treaty, in spite of the fact that it must have been difficult for him not to go through with an action he had been firmly announcing as being immediate for over four years. He has furthermore offered to have the Soviet Union guarantee the freedom of West Berlin and the access to the city, and, as far as one can guess, has substituted, for his original demand that only troops of neutral {XIII} countries should be in West Berlin, the demand that the allied troops there be under the United Nations flag instead of the American and British flags.

2) The Chinese-Soviet conflict, which was emphasized and analyzed in Chapter V of the book, has in the meantime erupted into full force. While two years ago many experts still minimized the significance of this conflict, it is now hardly possible to do so any longer. The conflict became even more explicit following the Cuban event. The Chinese accused Khrushchev of appeasement of the „imperialists,“ while Khrushchev, especially in his speech in the Supreme Soviet (December 12, 1962) published in the Russian newspapers, compared the Chinese to Adenauer and to Trotsky--about the most insidious comparisons a Soviet leader can make. He accused them frankly of the non-Leninist belief that war could bring about socialism, and stated that no socialist system can be built on the ashes of thermonuclear destruction.

3) The analysis of the book has also been confirmed in regard to the German problem. It has been confirmed most clearly, perhaps, by the recent Adenauer-De Gaulle pact, by De Gaulle's veto of Great Britain's entry into the Common Market, and by his insistence on an independent French nuclear force. The German protest against the exclusion of Great Britain must be taken with a grain of salt. The German leaders are more prudent than De Gaulle and know that they still need the support of the United States; hence they make statements to show that they are not opposed to Great Britain. But if Adenauer had really wanted to insist on Great Britain's entry, he would not have concluded the pact with De Gaulle without making it a condition that France would change her attitude. Perhaps Adenauer is in this respect in opposition to the majority of his party--the answer to this question will depend to some extent on whether or not the Adenauer-De Gaulle pact is ratified by the Bundestag.

The conclusion of the Adenauer-De Gaulle pact shows that Germany and France want to be the power center of {XIV} the „New Europe,“ perhaps with Holland and Belgium as satellites, and without Great Britain and, indirectly, the United States. They also aim, apparently, at a German-French nuclear force. To quote James Reston, (*New*



York Times, Western edition, January 30, 1963) : „What particularly troubles people here [Washington] is the fear that President De Gaulle’s insistence on a French nuclear force will lead inevitably, not tomorrow but one day, to the nuclear rearmament of Germany. And this in turn will send a shudder, not only through the Soviet Union but throughout the world.“

Furthermore, the Bonn-Paris axis seems to have already begun to lean towards the inclusion of Spain in their bloc. According to recent reports (*New York Times*, Western Edition, January 30 and 31, 1963) the visit of French Minister of the Interior Frey has led to an agreement of closer control of respective refugees from both countries, and the Spanish Foreign Ministry has had to disavow officially the report of one of the most significant Spanish newspapers, *Ya*, that Spain was seeking a closer relation with the new French-German bloc. A day later the *New York Times* reported that France and Spain have already considered a treaty involving close military co-operation. Many signs seem to point to the possibility of an authoritarian Bonn-Paris axis that will eventually be under the domination of Germany as the much stronger partner, and which will be a threat to the democratic systems of Great Britain and the United States, as well as to the smaller democratic countries in Europe. Clearly an American-Soviet understanding can not be directed *against* China or against America’s European allies. Neither side can afford to be left without its respective allies. But an American-Russian understanding can be achieved in terms of international nuclear disarmament without disrupting the present alliances. This, indeed, requires skilled diplomacy and a realism that is not overimpressed by the romantic postures of a quixotic De Gaulle, and that can see at the {XV} same time which incentives China might respond to as conditions for stopping their nuclear armament.

The events of these last two years have, in my opinion, confirmed the main conclusion of this book—the necessity for a United States-Soviet understanding. It is indisputable that China will have atomic weapons in a few years, and so will France, probably together with West Germany. If the United States and the Soviet Union were to end the cold war, they could by peaceful means prevent the further development of nuclear armament among their respective allies; not only because of the tremendous economic and military superiority of the two great countries, but because the Chinese leaders, given economic aid by means of credits and free trade, and recognition as the representatives of China in the United Nations, would be likely to prefer furthering the development of their system to violence and war. While it is true that they have, as yet, less to lose than the rich nations, they have a great deal to lose by a thermonuclear war. They are not adventurers like Chiang Kai-shek, whose only hope for success is war.¹

To sum up, I want to emphasize that the main thesis of this book, the need for universal disarmament and for the ending of the cold war, has been confirmed by the events of the last two years. I also want to repeat another thesis of this book: the Soviet

¹ The recently concluded De Gaulle-Adenauer treaty states officially that Berlin is a „Land“ (state) of the German Federal Republic, and thus repudiates the American-British position that Berlin is not an integral part of the Federal Republic. Adenauer, in this provision of the treaty, reserves for himself the right to repudiate this clause during the three-month period after its ratification, and so obviously puts the United States on the spot. If we do not protest against this clause we tacitly agree with his position. The ominous consequence of this would be that no compromise with the Soviet Union on the Berlin question would be possible.



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Union will be forced into an aggressive policy, led by the „tough“ wing in China and by the Stalinist opponents of Khrushchev, if we do not end the cold war. Our victory in the cold war would imply the {XVI} likelihood of a nuclear war. While I stressed in this book the ritualistic character of Soviet ideology, it must not be forgotten that this ideology can become revitalized if the Soviet leaders feel that there is no chance for understanding with the United States. They would have to make the revolutionary slogans effective, in order to mobilize their people for a war and to gain allies among the colonial nations. Whether or not such a development takes place depends largely on the wisdom and realism of the leaders of the United States, particularly on their readiness to end the cold war--rather than to drive the Russians into a corner.