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## Preface

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Since before I went to college, I have been writing columns for different publications. First it was just one or two for the paper at Andrews Air Force Base, then for my student newspaper, the *Associate*, at Claremont Men's College, and finally, beginning in 1966, I started to write for the *Santa Ana Register*. I have written for that publication since then hundreds of columns, becoming a regular columnist for the *Orange County Register* in 2001.

During these years I have also written for *Reason* magazine, which I helped found, the *Freeman*, *Liberty*, and other small magazines, as well as several columns for the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Boston Globe*, the *Houston Chronicle*, the *Chicago Times*, and a few pieces each for the *Washington Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. Many of my columns have appeared on websites and have been translated into Spanish, Italian, and even Lithuanian. My book, *Liberty & Culture, Essays on the Idea of a Free Society* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1989), contains many of my earlier writings. The present work reprints only a few of those, among them probably my first or second column for the *Register*, "Freedom: Local and National."

When I was a graduate student in philosophy at the University of California, Santa Barbara, one of the visiting professors from the United Kingdom, Ilham Dilman, scolded me for writing columns — who was I, at my relatively

young age, to sound off on various issues; I should wait until I knew a thing or two more. The late Eric Vogelin, a prominent conservative philosopher, also told me, when he had me over to dinner at his Stanford University home back in 1976, that I should not waste my time with such trivia.

I am not sure I can answer these reproofs with some superior retort other than to say that I have believed it prudent and sensible to assert myself, at least, thoughtfully. For someone who escaped not only from a tyrannical country but also from the home of a brutal parent, the liberty to speak out on issues I care about is precious. I believe these missives have encouraged a reflective thought or two by many readers—and they continue to do so, judging by the volume of mail and email messages I receive from around the globe.

I am grateful to have had the chance to sound off on matters I believe important, especially on the threats to individual liberty in the United States and around the rest of the world. There may be interest in seeing some of the pieces I have written—and no more than perhaps one-fifth of my columns are published in this volume—put between book covers and made easy to have in one's library. Not everyone should speak on all important topics, and I have focused mainly on issues bearing on a free and just society—not on physical fitness, psychological self-help, or healthful eating habits, for example. Viva the division of labor!

To those who have encouraged me over the years I wish to give special thanks; to critics I also wish to express gratitude, since they have kept me hopping mentally, which is nearly always good exercise.