

# Howard Fast Says He's No Longer a Communist

IN AN INTERVIEW published in the N. Y. Times Friday (Feb. 1) Howard Fast, the novelist, said that he has disassociated himself from the Communist Party and no longer considers himself a Communist.

The Worker verified the accuracy of the interview in a telephone conversation with Fast. Until last June Fast was a columnist for the Daily Worker.

According to the Times, Fast declared: "I am neither anti-Soviet nor anti-Communist, but I cannot work and write in the Communist movement."

Fast told the Times that Nikita S. Khrushchev's speech last year on the errors of Stalin was the chief factor leading to his present position.

"It was incredible and unbelievable to me," the Times quoted Fast as saying "that Khrushchev did not end his speech with a promise of the reforms needed to guarantee that Stalin's crimes will not be repeated, reforms such as an end to capital punishment, trial by jury and habeas corpus. Without these reforms one can make neither sense nor reason of the speech itself."

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ACCORDING to the Times, Fast indicated he had spent the last several months in fighting out with himself the question of his future. The Times said he asserted that he admired Communist Party members as dedicated fighters for peace, but that he personally felt he could no longer submit to Communist discipline.

Revelations of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union also influenced his position, the Times said. Fast was quoted as saying that he knew "little about anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union before the Khrushchev speech. That little troubled

In an early issue The Worker will publish an exclusive interview with Howard Fast.

me, but I repressed my doubts. Then the article appeared in the Volksstimme last spring telling what had actually happened. It was not an easy thing to live with."

The Volksstimme is a Yiddish language newspaper published in Warsaw.

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FAST ASSERTED that he had been a devoted Communist because of his belief in democracy, equalitarianism and social justice. He said that his anger at the Khrushchev speech was particularly sharp because of his experience with the American judicial system.

"I was tried and convicted in 1946 under circumstances that made a mockery of our pretensions of justice here," the Times quoted Fast. "But while that was happening I was consoled by the belief that in the Soviet Union a person would receive justice. I can no longer believe this."

Fast was convicted in 1946 on a contempt of Congress charge for refusing to produce the records of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee before the House Un-American Activities Committee. He served three months in jail.

The Times reported that Fast said he had been deeply moved by recent events in Poland. "Poland," he said, "has been an inspiration. Poland has been a living proof of the dream of many people that socialism and democracy can exist together."

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FAST TOLD the Times he would not repudiate or return the

Stalin International Peace Prize he received in 1953.

Fast said he had been a Communist Party member for almost fifteen years. "I am not ashamed of anything I have done," he said. "I fought against war, Negro oppression and social injustice. I am proud of my books. I regret that in some of my political articles I went overboard—but by and large, I stand by what I wrote."

The Times reported Fast saying that in Daily Worker articles last spring he had called for Communists to take a new look at the Soviet campaign against cosmopolitanism, a movement he now regards as a form of Soviet anti-Semitism directed against Jewish intellectuals there, as well as at what he referred to as the party ban on psychoanalysis and its condemnation of writers like James T. Farrell, author of the Studs Lonkin books.

"I was supported in raising these questions by John Gates, Alan Max and Joe Clark," the Times quoted as saying.

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IN AN EDITORIAL on Tuesday the Daily Worker said it was "firmly convinced" that Fast was mistaken just as we have felt that Joseph Starobin and John Stueben, who publicly took somewhat similar positions, were mistaken."

"If ever there was a time when people could present and fight for their point of view within the Communist movement, this is it," the paper said.

The Daily Worker regretted that "Fast, like Starobin and Steuben, went to another publication to present his views on the party, rather than taking advantage of the free discussion prevailing in the columns of the Daily Worker."

The attitude of the N.Y. Times towards socialism, the Daily Worker said, "hardly needs describing here."

There is "no doubt" that Fast and "others who have taken similar steps will continue on the side of progress and socialism." It disagreed with "anyone who may be inclined to look upon them as 'enemies' of socialism, as was often done in the past." This, it concluded, "does not lessen our strong disagreement with the step they have taken."

## A WORTHY PURPOSE

THOUGH our own fund drive is far from completed there's another financial appeal that deserves our readers' support. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is asking Americans, white and black, to give it \$1,000,000 to enable it to continue its splendid fight for civil rights.

Jackie Robinson is national chairman of the Freedom Fund Drive. Jackie, the famous clutch-hitter, is swinging again. This is one game in which the players are all of us.

The address of the NAACP is 20 W. 40 St., New York.