

HISTORY
AND
CONSCIENCE

The Case of Howard Fast

By **HERSHEL D. MEYER**

Author of **THE LAST ILLUSION:
AMERICA'S PLAN FOR WORLD DOMINATION**

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IN PREPARATION
PROBLEMS OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

HISTORY and CONSCIENCE

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By HERSHEL D. MEYER

Anvil-Atlas Publishers: New York
1958

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PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.



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To my son — Emanuel

An Anvil-Atlas Book

DISTRIBUTED BY

NEW CENTURY PUBLISHERS, INC.

832 Broadway, New York 3, N. Y.

Bob Southey, you're a poet—Poet laureate,
 And representative of all the race,
 Although 'tis true that you turn'd out a Tory at
 Last—yours has lately been a common case;
 And now, my Epic Renegade! What are ye at?
 With all the Lakers, in and out of place?
 A nest of tuneful persons, to my eye
 Like 'four and twenty Blackbirds in the pye;
 Which pye being open'd they began to sing'
 (This old song and new simile holds good),
 'A dainty dish to set before the king. . . .
 The vulgarest tool that Tyranny could want,
 With just enough of talent, and no more. . . .
 Europe has slaves, allies, kings, armies still,
 And Southey lives to sing them very ill. . . .
 Apostasy's so fashionable, too,
 To keep *one* creed's a task grown quite Herculean;
 Is it not so, my Tory, ultra-Julian?

*From Byron's Dedication to DON JUAN—
 addressed to Robert Southey, the
 poet laureate, who had recanted his
 former adherence to the cause of
 the French Revolution.*

PART I

In November 1957, Howard Fast published *The Naked God*, a book in which he expressed his disillusion with communism and the Communist Party. For ten years Fast's writings were unjustly ignored by the press in the USA. He now blossomed forth as a political as well as literary celebrity. The press which ignored his novels, his criticism and his political statements now discovered in his writings and opinions significant testimony on the crucial issues of our time.

Five month's earlier, Fast's resignation from the Communist Party had received a journalistic acclaim far greater than that which had greeted similar announcements in the past by writers like Malraux and Koestler. The reason is not hard to seek. After the disillusionment of these and other intellectuals in the thirties, there had intervened the tremendous experience in which humanity had seen the Soviet Union act as the shield barring the fascist conquest of Europe and the world. There had then supervened the bitter and dangerous decade of the Cold War in which this anti-fascist unity of progressive humanity had to be blotted out in the name of the newer conspiracies to atomize the socialist countries in the name of "liberation."

By 1957, the issues of atomic war or peace had become inescapable. The great historic contest between socialism and capitalism had now progressed beyond the military and economic spheres to a competition for the minds and aspirations of humanity as a whole.

Fast had been considered a leading writer on the Left. For political reasons, his books were ignored by the literary world in his own country. But in the socialist sector of the world his books sold in the millions of copies, eagerly read by large audiences and sponsored by socialist governments which approved the humanist, freedom-seeking heroes of his volumes.

Now Fast proclaimed in bitter and anguished accents that the world which had spitefully ignored his work was free, while the world which had raised him to the stature of a world literary figure was enslaved and oppressive. No wonder then that Fast's tirades against his former beliefs and colleagues were hailed as a "major cold war victory" and "one of the biggest propaganda defeats Moscow received in 1957." (*New York Times*, Dec. 1, 1957). The novelist who could no longer endure the alleged constraints on his creativity (during which he had produced the books which brought him fame) now willingly lent himself to a broadcast under the sponsorship of the notoriously provocative Radio Liberation whose principal aim is the subversion of the socialist system of collective ownership and the restoration of capitalist ownership of land and factories by counter-revolutionary force and violence.

The inflated evaluation of this relatively minor political event served not only to underline the growing intensity of the cultural and ideological struggle between the two world camps, but also testified unwittingly to the absence in the West of any more substantial Cold War victories. The Soviet Union was winning the friendship of the hundreds of millions of colonial peoples while the Cold War agencies had to content themselves with the defection of a widely publicized writer.

Fast's recantation came when the American Communist Party was itself in a crisis induced by years of government repression and jailings, by its resultant isolation, by its own errors of the past, by the complexity of the new problems, and by the incursion of non-Marxist trends within its own ranks. This crisis was intensified by the stunning revelations made in the famous Khrushchev Report on the repressive distortions which Stalin had introduced into Soviet society, notably in the last years of his life.

Though Fast's book was generally considered an incoherent, highly subjective document which failed to probe basic motivations for his joining and leaving the Party, it nevertheless merits analysis. Its observations and attitudes

provide a springboard from which to tackle the issues which concern millions. Involved are many philosophical, social and moral questions, problems of historical necessity and individual conscience, and thus one's conduct amid a world in crisis.

Howard Fast describes his metamorphosis as a "passion that turned into a curse." He is speaking of his passion for social advance. His curse is on the October Revolution. For all its tirades, expletives, abuse, accusations, distortions and self-justifications, his treatise unwittingly illuminates attitudes which have been held before by men who could not understand their own defections from the forward advance of the great body of humanity. Yet the rages and indictments of a Fast are explicable in the light of what we know of history, classes and human psychology. His "testimony" is far more about himself than it is about the vast social movements with which he is "disillusioned." *The Naked God*, therefore presents an example of that process of disillusionment with history and social advance which followed in the wake of every revolutionary upheaval, and which certainly will happen again in the course of other class struggles to come.

The special quality of Fast's disillusionment—its frenzy, on the one hand, and its timing on the other—is linked to a number of factors. One of these is his purely emotional attitude toward social and historical events and phenomena: the other is his joining a well-defined anti-historical individualist and mystical mood now prevalent among some contemporary artists and philosophers. Let us examine both these aspects.

Rationalist philosophers have always distinguished between the vagueness and instability of ideas which are emotional in origin, and the durability of what Spinoza called "adequate" ideas based on reason. Science and the history of human thought confirm the validity of this distinction. Unlike emotional ideas, rational thought undergoes a process of continual refinement, from inexact or primitive to more precise scientific concepts. Even the revolutionary concepts of a

Newton or an Einstein were built on truths formulated by their predecessors. Higher levels of cognition are linked to the lower since the old carries within itself the potentialities or the germs of the new. Science is thus compared to an edifice whose summit rests on the layers below.

An altogether different situation prevails with emotional ideas—ideas supported or rejected because of inner needs or longings. They may arise out of the fear of death, the longing for immortality, the desire for personal salvation, or out of hatred of oppression and commiseration for the downtrodden. Whether true or false, i.e., whether corresponding to reality or not, ideas not anchored in clear insights but sustained only by emotions are usually unstable. Some personal mishap, disappointment or shocking experience may cause an inner crisis leading to a total break with formerly held attitudes or emotional ideas. The object “loved” or “hated” is expelled by what psychologists commonly call a process of purgation or catharsis.

Thus, while out of a rational system of ideas which has outlived its time much remains that is of enduring value, the remains of consumed passions leave only ashes and cinders. Frequently the more intense the emotion, the more extreme is the polarity of the emotion replacing it.

Freud's theories, though burdened with unscientific and unprovable concepts, focused attention on the psychopathology arising out of the conflict between ideas founded on conscious, intelligent reasoning, and those arising out of what he calls the “unconscious,” the “untamable” passions of man's “nether world.” Pavlov opened the way for a scientific understanding of the processes involved in the dynamics of emotional ideas. The experiments of the Pavlovian school on conditioned reflexes clearly show that identical perceptions, words, and images may bring on different and even opposite responses in the same individual at different times. Above all, they illuminate the dialectic interrelation that exists between stimulation and inhibition, how excitement, exaltation and over-stimulation may turn into insensitivity and paralysis; how ideas associated with a positive, affirmative reaction may

be suddenly changed to elicit a powerful negative reaction so that attraction turns into repulsion, love into hate, and the romantic into the cynical.

Ideas hinged to or conditioned by given emotions are thus always volatile, often changing without notice. In the highly-tensioned field of political thought, such fluctuations are, of course, a commonplace. Here *all* ideas carry an emotionally positive or negative charge. Furthermore, unlike ideas concerning the dynamics of atoms, ideas involving the dynamics of a social conflict make for participation in that conflict.* Thus, regardless how scientifically formulated, ideas regarding socialism or capitalism, war or peace, or colonialism, involve taking sides.

Personal involvement will infuse even dry scientific data with the heat of human emotions. Ideas and emotions may thus reinforce each other. They may, on the other hand, contradict and oppose each other, since it is easier to accept ideas than to act upon them, especially if such action collides or conflicts with one's class interests, with rooted emotions or behavior patterns, or leads to unpleasant personal consequences. This is the root of the passions surrounding all meaningful social ideas or political convictions.

The violent intensity with which an individual like Fast now dissociates himself from the movement and the personages associated with his entire political life is not unique. It had its counterpart in revolutionary and counter-revolutionary eras of the past. The intellectual generation of the Wordsworths, Southseys, and their friends experienced this drama as well.

The French Revolution of 1789 shattered the structure of European feudalism and ushered in a new era of the Western

* Every scientist recognizes two modes of natural development—the slow and evolutionary and the explosive and revolutionary. Astrophysicists, for example, often delight in portraying the explosive, revolutionary changes attending the birth of new stars. No such delight however is expressed, for example, by bourgeois historians when dealing with social revolutions. Emotions reflecting class interests immediately block their recognition of the principle that human society, too, must inevitably undergo revolutionary changes.

world. Like every uprising against a decayed social system it can be shown to have been historically necessary and inevitable. However, the course of this revolution did not fit the preconceived ideas of either its visionary supporters or its fanatical enemies. While the scholars and churchmen who backed the king and the aristocracy saw only the "crimes" of the Revolution (the Revolution was by definition a crime and hence its work could be nothing else), those who favored the social aims of the Revolution found the justifications for virtually every step taken by it. What others saw as "excesses," they found on examination to be either necessary, inevitable, or, at the very least, not a nullification of the main line of advance. Men like Jefferson, Byron, Shelley, and later Victor Hugo could lament the innocent victims in the Revolution's path; they could admit that wicked persons had infiltrated the Revolution. But this did not stop them from defending the cause of the Revolution and its results without wavering or equivocation. Were these men who lacked moral sense or feeling? Were they less moral than a Howard Fast in the face of revolutionary complexities, errors and tragedies?

In retrospect, the approval or non-approval of the French Revolution, appears as ludicrous and academic as a discussion of the desirability of the fall of the Roman empire. Yet among reactionary circles the question whether the French Revolution was necessary, just, moral or immoral is still a matter of learned controversy.

Social revolutions do not proceed according to the preconceived notions of man any more than revolutions in nature. Historical development proceeds according to laws which, on the whole, are independent of the will or moral judgments of individuals or of the verdict of historians. However, history is made by men who pursue certain objectives. Being simultaneously both subjects and objects in historical development, men must take sides and choose between what they consider good or evil, just or unjust objectives. In the final analysis, therefore, differences of opinion on what is his-

torically necessary *inevitably turn into differences of objectives.**

The attitude toward the revolution is defined in terms of the struggle for the long-range revolutionary program, and not merely by the attitude towards the cataclysmic events that set it off.

It took the French working classes almost a century to consolidate the gains of the bourgeois democratic revolution. Since church, king and aristocracy of all of Europe united to suppress and strangle it, the revolution relapsed, became warped, "degenerated" and feudal reaction made several comebacks. It was not until 1871 that the French bourgeois democratic revolution was fought to its conclusion. Its final phase was sealed with the blood of tens of thousands of Paris Communards executed by the joint command of Franco-German reaction. During this protracted and bloody contest, some people at one time hailed the revolutionary upheaval, and later bitterly condemned it. Poets and writers like Southey or Wordsworth, originally enthusiastic, sensed themselves betrayed by the terroristic stage of the revolution and in disillusionment, joined the ranks of the Revolution's enemies. Others, like Coleridge, withdrew from the political arena and frequently also from the world of reality and took refuge in the world of romanticism.

In his autobiographical poem, "The Prelude," Wordsworth's disillusionment with the Revolution becomes the subject of tormented verse: "France lured me forth . . . whence better days for all mankind. . . . Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive." But then the revolutionaries "became oppressors in their turn," and

"I summoned my best skill and toiled intent
To anatomize the frame of social life

* Every historical account, thus involves partisan judgments upon the actions of the one or the other side of the contending historical forces. Historians claiming utter objectivity (E. H. Carr, Isaac Deutscher, Frederick L. Schuman and others), are, as a rule, neither impartial nor indifferent. Though often veiled, their evaluations correspond to the interests of either the reactionary or progressive social forces. There is, therefore, no such thing as Olympian, detached historical writing.

Now believing, now disbelieving: endlessly perplexed
With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
Of obligations, what the rule and whence the sanction. . . .
I lost all feeling of conviction and in fine
Sick, wearied and with contrarities
Yielded up moral questions in despair.
This was the crisis of that strong disease,
This the soul's last and lowest ebb. I drooped. . . ."

The exalted hopes of utopian idealists are always in advance of what is realizable at a given historical period. Disillusionment is consequently an aftermath of every progressive social upheaval.

The vacillating attitude displayed by some intellectuals toward freedom struggles is usually, but not always, determined by the middle position they occupy in class society. Their attitude is frequently associated with a mood of despair and disillusionment towards the human scene as a whole. The incessant carnage, the fearful violence and cruelties of all human history, the crimes and miseries accompanying every attempt at progress, the irrationality with which even reason and justice become defiled by the struggle of classes arouse in these intellectuals a sense of frustration and bewilderment.

In his *Philosophy of History*, Hegel speaks of the "hopeless sadness" and "the intolerable disgust" that befalls those who seek in history a theater of happiness but find only a "slaughter bench." Disillusioned "we withdraw, at last . . . into the more agreeable environment of our individual life . . . in short we retreat into the selfishness that stands on the quiet shore and thence enjoy in safety the distant spectacle of wrecks confusedly hurled." He calls it the "moral embitterment" and the "revolt of the good spirit (if it had a place within us) that finds its gloomy satisfaction in the empty and fruitless sublimities of that negative result."

Writing in 1822, Hegel doubts whether "nobility of soul" is the only motivation for his contemporaries' dwelling in "negative sublimities." He further comments on the shallowness and sterility of historical judgments based on personal,

private emotions. During the forty years between the revolutionary waves of 1789 and 1830, European intellectuals were nursing bitter disappointment at the outcome of the French Revolution. This was also the period of the industrial revolution, the beginning of large-scale industry, the 10-14 hour work day, child labor, starvation wages, of cyclical crises and mass unemployment. Social relations and the life of the destitute masses appeared even uglier and more degraded under bourgeois rule than under conditions of feudal serfdom.

A host of European romantic poets and irrationalist philosophers, among them Schopenhauer, the progenitor of Nietzsche, began to characterize change and progress as illusions. Humanity, they declared, was an animal herd doomed to eternal barbarism. Unlike Hegel, the rationalist who saw the advance of humanity amidst a diversity of conflicts and contradictions, these poets and philosophers of despair interpreted the new in terms of the old and dismissed historic conflicts as blind and senseless. They withdrew to "quiet shores," guarding the purity of their moral concepts from the raging struggle around them.

Our contemporary world knows many such dispirited "noble spirits"—writers, poets, philosophers, intellectuals—whose gaze is fixed upon the "negative result." Nestled on some of the quiet shores of the Western world, they never tire of pointing to the "wrecks confusedly hurled," the errors, excesses and failures of contemporary revolutions. But today, more so than in Hegel's time, such "noble spirits" are energetically solicited and urged to popularize their "inner visions." The mood and temper of every social system in crisis and decline, always lean toward pessimism and nihilism. Devoid of rational goals, its leaders search for the mystic and irrational. And thus today, literary-philosophical works carrying the message of despair and resignation, yield their authors more than just "gloomy satisfactions."

The culture of a social system in decline is two-layered: underneath is the malodorous layer of commercialized mass culture, the rowdy, obscene products that pour forth in bil-

lions of copies, whose aim is to degrade and corrupt for profit: above, a layer of *hommes de lettres* who weave only the esthetically most refined cultural products for the select.

In the Western world today the melodious pessimistic wail of its dying social order is trumpeted by the literary-philosophical school known as the Existentialists. These heirs of Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche are currently the most revered and best rewarded Brahmins. For Existentialism is the philosophy of counter-revolution *par excellence*. Virtually every intellectual who has turned his back on the cause of the October Revolution—Silone, Koestler, to cite well-known cases—has done so with existentialist rationalizations. It is notable that Howard Fast's latest thinking shows a strong existentialist trend.

Existentialism bases itself on the teachings of Soren Kirkegaard (1813-1855), a Danish mystic who believed that reason and science are impotent in solving the problems of humanity. He defined truth as "an objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness." Whatever this supposedly signifies, it clearly denies the need for analyzing objective reality, for distinguishing between truth and falsehood. He writes: "All the thinker has to think is that he is an existing individual. For this reason he always has enough to think about. *Humanity in the abstract is a subject soon disposed of and likewise world history*; even such tremendous portions as China, Persia, etc. are as nothing to the hungry monster of the historical process. . . . But the subjective thinker who in all his thinking remains at home in his existence will find an inexhaustible subject for his thought in his faith." (From his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Princeton University Press, 1944.) In this dissolution of objective historic standards, the Existentialist mocks human action and human organization as contemptible.

Existentialism is a philosophy highly suited to the isolated, socially alienated man, estranged and suspicious of his fellowmen. It looks upon the world through the dark emotions of the supposedly uncommon man where the warped and the

diseased become insect-men. Man, in this literature, is chained to evil, to atavistic instincts and doomed by unreason. Though providing at times some insights into the psychological complexities of intellectuals in an age of crisis and transition, the existentialist literature takes death and the dying as the measure for the living. It exults in similarities between man and cobra or gorilla, in "truths" of darkness and fatality.

Existentialist thought, thus, centers its main fire on the possibility of social progress and on the building of a rational social order. For the existentialist, every historic event is pervaded with moral ambiguity, or worthlessness. For such a person there are mainly horror, crime and error in the social upheavals of history. He points to the elements of the old that are still within the new. By centering attention mostly on this side of history, existentialism denies and denigrates the immense part played by collective human effort and class struggles which advance humanity.

The existentialist divorces morality from social goals and the means to attain them. He compresses the sufferings and struggles of millions into a personal anxiety. By divorcing human afflictions from their social context, the crimes committed by the hunted or persecuted become as iniquitous as those committed by the hunters or aggressors. And since all freedom struggles have been attended by crimes against individuals, the existentialist morality centered exclusively upon the individual, becomes a defense for the status quo.

This attitude leads to a grotesque kind of super-morality which in practice becomes either an obsession-ridden inaction or a form of amorality. Or else, this kind of philosophy rivets the mind on tortuous, abstract discussions as to whether one should, in the name of real morality, save one's child or its mother in a sinking vessel.

The language of Existentialists usually loses its vagueness as soon as they approach the subject of the October Revolution. Through Communism, they invoke the "evil one" against which they mobilize their special Sunday-Sabbath morality. Here they see only monstrous evil against the individual. They turn with hatred against the relatively isolated errors

and crimes of the working class revolution, but rarely find similar hatred for the continuous and wholesale crimes of imperialism against countless victims throughout the Middle East, Asia, Africa and Latin America. The butcheries in Algeria, or millions of children perishing from diseases of malnutrition in the NATO and SEATO dominated colonial countries, to take but a few examples, are remote moral questions to them.

Thus, the Nobel-prize winner, Albert Camus, summarized this supermundane existentialist morality in the words: "No cause that cannot be won in our time is worth a child's tear, much less a child's life." For who is to measure the tears of one child against another? The tears of the millions of children who were about to perish in Nazi crematoria as against the tears of the children of a condemned Nazi war criminal? And who can guarantee the victory of any great human cause in our time against the fierce resistance of entrenched monopolies? Mr. Camus and his fellow existentialists recommend that the peoples of the world occupy themselves with riddles of conscience and cease struggling with real social problems, since "you may never harvest the fruits of your struggles and sacrifices."*

Howard Fast's *Naked God* embodies much of the existentialist mode of thought. Its mood is of dread and anxiety, of the forlorn "conscience-stricken" moralist crying out against the wrongs of great social movements. Fast, like Kierkegaard, disposes of history by asserting that "great movements and struggles of men and nations tend to become meaningless." In his projection of the single man against the actions of men in groups, Fast paraphrases Heidegger: "Man is respon-

* "Committed but aloof" Mr. Justin O'Brien described Albert Camus in the *New York Times* on whose literary pages existentialist writers are hallowed as redeemers of "modern man's agonized soul." To illustrate Mr. Camus's political sagacity, Mr. O'Brien writes, "Unlike most French, Mr. Camus feels solidarity with both the French and the Arabs in the present painful conflict. He has already done what he could to further understanding and promises to play a part again as soon as there is a hope of building a unified Algeria." (Does he mean after intensified French massacres force the Algerians into submission?)

sible for himself. No theory, no historical objectivity can substitute for this . . . only the individual is to decide matters of social responsibility. . . ." He concludes that "only the historically developed human conscience reflects the broadest necessity of mankind."

By these means he is pitting his alleged private conscience against the collective conscience of oppressed and struggling humanity and as it expresses itself historically in the class struggles. Is this either possible or desirable in terms of morality? Conscience is not a private creation; it takes meaning from the interaction of man with his fellow-men. Its values are the product of social life, and are shaped by one's group, class, country and culture. Moral judgments are meaningless without the concrete analysis of a given human situation. Only a social science based on the forward movement of society as a whole can reflect the broadest necessities of mankind; the varying mutable conscience of an individual, which is based on emotion, can never do so.

It is true of course that history is filled with mistakes, crimes, injustices, even on the part of progressive social classes. Existentialism did not discover this, even as it makes the pain brought to some individuals the dominant criterion for measuring all social advances. Karl Marx did not offer the working class any idealist-religious visions of how it would reach mastery of nature and itself. In 1850, he told the Communist League "*crimes, abuses, superstitions, selfishness, all this residue of the historic past, all this mud of capitalism will cling for fifty or a hundred years before the working class is fit to rule.*"

What Existentialist writers, and Howard Fast, do not wish to understand, each for varying motives, is that the bitter and stony road of the revolutionary struggle cannot provide any prescriptions for the mystical salvation of its individual participants *but that this does not deprive that struggle of its moral significance, nor make moral actions impossible.* Marxism recognizes the interdependence of the positive and the negative in social change, even while it scourges all immoral and anti-human actions and social rela-

tionships. The forward movement of mankind unquestionably will have a different character when the world is rid of the system that makes war profitable, economic crises inevitable, and exploitation of man by man the normal mode of existence.

While it is true that history is always made by men, by individual men acting in groups, to project one's personal feelings to the same level as mass historic events, to give private feelings historic dimensions, is to lead to grotesque, and even monstrous results. Could the private conscience turn its back on the revolutionary overthrow of feudalism because this process inevitably entailed shortcomings, errors, crimes, disillusionments, and failures? Could it reject the abolition of chattel slavery in the United States because this process was equally accompanied by stupidities, greed, wickedness no less than by heroism and sublimity?*

The interplay of private conscience and historic movement cannot be understood through Fast's emotion-charged irrationalities regarding the flaws in the advances of socialism in the first socialist state in the world. The "private conscience," without historic understanding, was able to lead intellectuals and novelists like Hamsun, Heidegger, and Celine into the swamp of Nazism. Fast's private conscience, sundered from historic realities, is able to let him feel at home with the unscrupulous Radio Free Europe. The mature historic conscience can never be merely private. The private conscience unrelated to history leads to opportunism or to callous superficiality. Fast's new advocacy of the allegedly private conscience can offer nothing to sincere men in these times of great historic change.

* Writes V. J. Jerome: "From his favored position, Robert Southey looked back with nostalgia to the *Ancien Regime*: 'Bad as the feudal times were, they were far less injurious than these commercial ones to the kindly and generous feelings of human nature and far, far more favorable to the principles of honor and integrity.'"—*Intellectuals and the War*, page 28. New York, 1940.

This is the classic blindness of a political morality separated from actual history and an understanding of the meaning of social advance; it states a partial truth to advance an overwhelming reactionary falsehood.

PART II

Throughout the *Naked God*, Fast repeatedly declares that the event that finally compelled him to a decisive rejection of his past was the publication of Khrushchev's report. This document he declares "made my beliefs come crumbling down in ashes." It was "the single factor that more than any other determined my course of action." Fast makes no attempt to analyze this report in the light of Soviet history—its involvements in wars, its resistance to invasions and sabotage, and its necessary preoccupation with raising a backward, semi-literate nation to a modern great power. He concludes from his reading of the report "that for giving one's life for the cause of mankind and the brotherhood of man the reward was death." He claims that while Soviet writers were "rewarded with death for the misfortune of plying their trade . . . in the United States I was crippled in my function as a writer by my membership in a very unpopular party," but . . . "I continued to write . . . I continued to live."

Crimes were indeed committed against a number of writers in the Soviet Union. No judgment of these crimes, however, is valid that does not investigate the causal nexus out of which they resulted. What was the origin and who was responsible for these crimes? How did it come about that people fighting for the brotherhood of man (which Fast still identifies with Communism) should have lost their lives at the hands of their own comrades? Why should an embattled fortress weaken and endanger its cause by executing some of its writers or military leaders?

The Soviet explanation is that between 1936 and 1938 on the eve of World War II and between 1947 and 1949, on the eve of the Korean War, when the Cold War reached its greatest intensity, enemy agents penetrated the Soviet security apparatus, and with their accomplices within the U.S.S.R.

exploited the fears of the people to create disruption and confusion. They took advantage of Stalin's pathological suspiciousness and succeeded in framing a number of loyal Communists and party leaders. The purpose of these frame-ups was to weaken Soviet power from within before launching a military assault from without.

Recently, important evidence has begun to filter through, substantiating the Soviet claim in significant revelations by retired Nazi military and intelligence officers who served under Hitler. In a dispatch from Bonn, the *New York Times* reported on August 13, 1957: "*German sources since World War II have asserted that in fact Stalin was deceived by evidence cleverly fabricated by Nazi agents. Evidence against Marshal Blucher was found to have been fabricated along with that of other officers.*"

On August 26, 1957, the *Times* reported the same Nazi sources as asserting: "The purge of Marshal Tukhachevsky and his associates weakened the effectiveness of the Soviet armed forces. The full story of how he was sent to his death on the basis of what now appears to be fabricated evidence is still not known. *But the trial was probably a major success of the German Secret Services in its effort to weaken Soviet military strength.*" (my emphasis—H.D.M.)

Thus it was not the Socialist system, nor the Communist Party, but its mortal enemy, fascism, which initiated the frame-ups and excesses within the USSR.

After the war, the files and the personnel of Nazi Secret Services were taken over by the American cold war agencies. Washington spokesmen boasted of the services rendered by the von Gehlen organization, which had established a network of contacts on Soviet and other East European territories during the Nazi occupation period. Hundreds of millions of dollars were officially assigned for anti-Soviet subversion activity under Project X. The aim, it was openly avowed, was "to impose on Communist Russia the kind of internal strains and tensions that would crack it from within" or "weaken it to the point where military intervention would become feasible." Since 1946, numerous spokesmen of the

Cold War strategic command have repeatedly boasted of this objective.

Forced to match the enormous U.S. war preparations and other Cold War activities, the Soviet economy, severely weakened during the war, was strained to the utmost. Soviet life, racked by the fear of another and even more appalling conflict, became enveloped in fears and suspicions. The fears were not groundless. Fifteen million Soviet citizens had died at the hands of fascist invaders, many murdered with weapons given to Hitler by trusts in Britain and the United States. Before this, invasion had taken the lives of many in the early years of the Socialist state. In fighting this incessant and ruthless war upon it, the Socialist state became the victim of its own fears. In some cases, Soviet leaders were victimized by planted "evidence"; innocent people lost their lives. The dividends reaped by enemies of Socialism were the 1937 and 1948-1950 frame-up trials. Such was the tragedy unfolded in Khrushchev's report.

This is not to say that the Soviet Communist Party leaders were free of responsibility, or that there are no questions that have to be asked and answered regarding the governmental forms in the U.S.S.R. which could bring forth such a state of affairs, even taking into account the over-all context of outer and inner attack.

Soviet leaders are guilty of having allowed the establishment of a monstrous security apparatus which became infiltrated with criminal elements and became a state within the state, unbridled and unchecked, terrorizing the members of the Communist Party itself. They allowed themselves to be deceived by fabricated evidence. They failed to establish legal checks and balances that would have made such deceptions impossible.

Reacting against these things, Fast replaces historic understanding (which is not the same as forgiveness of avoidable errors and injustices) with an emotion-charged mysticism about the individual conscience based on a virulent anti-Communist political platform which is far from private.

Equally misleading is the conclusion he gets by contrasting his fate in the U.S.A. and the fate of the Soviet writers

who perished. This is a false analogy. He puts himself in the position of the tragically victimized Soviet writers, but fails to put the U.S.A. in the position of the U.S.S.R., that is, to put both shoes on both feet. To put the analogy correctly, Fast would have had to ask what would have been his fate in the U.S.A. were it, upon its founding, invaded by fourteen Communist countries in a joint effort to overthrow its capitalist system by brutal force? What would have been his position if after repelling the invaders, the U.S.A. would then have been encircled by a steel ring of hostile states whose most aggressively "anti-capitalist" member finally smashed its way into its interior in an unwarranted war to the death? What would have been his position as a Communist if in the U.S.A. millions of Americans had been slaughtered by the "liberating" armies, one third of its cities destroyed and left in ruins? And if after it began to repair its gaping wounds, the leading Communist officials were to announce day in day out that they could rain atomic bombs on its cities, with this threat followed up by the creation of hundreds of atomic bases in Mexico, Canada, Cuba, etc.?

The fate of Communists or Communist ideas in a U.S.A. so threatened can be left to the reader's imagination.

"I am alive," writes Fast, "because this is a land where the individual in his work and in his rights is always recognized and defended."

His false analogy leads him to an adulation of the system in which the formal rights and the actual state of affairs are highly different, and he is now ready to forget the social injustices of capitalism in his zeal to attack the injustices which grew up under socialism. He attacks not only the injustices, however, but the socialist system itself. The injustices which are built into the social structure of monopoly capitalism based on private profit are to him now only incidental to the glories of capitalist justice itself.

Only the Rosenbergs were executed, and only a few hundred were jailed, and some tens of thousands deported for their political views, and only hundreds of thousands lost their jobs, and millions silenced in a reign of "security" ter-

rorism. But all this took place in an America surrounded by oceans, threatened by no one, and uninvaded since 1812, with its bomber bases circling the globe, with its troops stationed in sixty countries, and with a "defense" boom bringing "prosperity" instead of devastation and smoking ruins.

However, there is something else that Mr. Fast conveniently fails to consider—a mere trifle. He might have been a Negro political dissident in Alabama, Georgia or Mississippi or just a plain, law-abiding Negro who wants his children to receive a proper education. His rights then might have been "recognized and defended" in peculiar ways, perhaps by his being bombed, lynched or by being framed and executed as was Willie McGee or the Martinsville Seven.

Furthermore, as Fast only recently seemed to know, the economic and political borders of this country extend far beyond its coastal shores. Venezuelans, Guatemalans, Cubans, Colombians and Haitians, among others are a part of Mr. Dulles' Free World. In these American provinces the jailing, torture and murder of Communists or progressive workers, students or intellectuals by juntas acting in behalf of the American coffee, or copper, or sugar and banana trusts are an almost daily affair. The right of the Guatemalan people to have a progressive government was summarily wiped out with Washington's help. The massacre of Colombians ("The death toll in a decade has soared well above 100,000. Burned homes and devastated villages stand as a monument to this fury"—*N. Y. Times*, 12/6/57) is but one product of Wall Street's defense of the rights of individuals.

Fast knew and must still know that the liberty and prosperity he speaks of rests in part on the oppression and exploitation of millions elsewhere. The criticism of socialism's weaknesses which leads to the hymning of imperialism's virtues is a shabby trick to play on sincere people seeking to advance human betterment.

In his railing at the Soviet Union, Fast calls the distribution of the Khrushchev Report in thousands of copies a "colossal stupidity." He implies that the Soviets compromised their

own interests. It is certain that capitalist states never commit such "stupidities" just as many intellectuals in the Western countries never experience a moral crisis over the systematic murder of colonial peoples. Parties and ruling classes whose interests rest on crime and corruption do not present itemized accounts of their misdeeds, nor do they engage in critical examinations of their moral record. Republican Party leaders one may safely assume will never review the legal murder of Joe Hill or of Sacco and Vanzetti.

Marxist and Communist movements have been in existence for over a hundred years. There are some eighty Communist Parties in the world today, some of which have memberships running into the millions. During and after World War II, many Communist Parties engaged in partisan and national liberation struggles involving military operations (in France, Italy, Malaya, Greece, etc.). Thousands of writers and scholars have been part of the Chinese Communist Party which conducted large-scale military operations for over two decades. The leaders of all these parties possessed the power of execution. Yet which writers or intellectuals of these parties who served the cause of mankind were rewarded by their leaders with death? Even bourgeois observers grudgingly grant the high moral and humanist spirit prevailing within the ranks of the Chinese Communist Party. Fast is lying even in regard to the Soviet Union: for with the exception of those who suffered as a result of the war hysteria and the frame-ups inspired by the enemies of socialism, the rewards that go to Soviet writers, educators, scholars and intellectuals are the envy of the capitalist world.

The moral level of a system or a party can be judged by how it examines and judges itself. And this judgment was rendered by the Soviet and the other Communist Parties in their moral reaction to the Khrushchev report. A storm of indignation swept through the ranks of Communists following the publication of the Khrushchev report. The moral crisis expressed itself in tens of thousands of public meetings, reappraisals, changes in leadership and political upheavals. This spontaneous reaction revealed the moral stature of these

movements as well as underscored the incompatibility between crime and corruption and the flowering of Socialist society.

Advancing social movements, aiming at abolishing poverty and war through ending the private ownership of the means of production, are able to reveal their own errors and injustices, inevitable in one degree or another according to varying historic situations. Howard Fast recoils from this self-criticism with violent hatred of the advancing social movement. Would he prefer that this movement conceal its errors and injustices to preserve both the injustice and his illusions? Is the higher moral attitude with the socialist movement which openly criticizes itself, or with Fast who rages against the movement for doing so?

PART III

Why is it that Fast contents himself with such an emotional and distorted reaction to the Khrushchev report and with a deliberately one-sided, unhistorical comparison between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A.? Fast shares the propensity of the intellectuals in the technically advanced nations whose prosperity rests on the exploitation of the backward countries to become more tolerant of the crimes and injustices committed to maintain this privileged position. Thus, the moral judgments and world view of London, Bonn and New York intellectuals differ markedly from those of Asian, Latin American, African intellectuals.

Recent sociological studies like *Mass Culture*, *The Lonely Crowd*, *The Power Elite* and *The White Collar* have pointed out the extraordinary pressures toward conformity and the commercial values dominating our national life. No one is free of these subtle, pervasive influences. The post-war boom particularly undermined the stamina of many an emotional rebel. Formerly destitute, discontented intellectuals, having participated in the postwar and armament prosperity, gradually succumbed to the philistinism of suburbia.

But for the former publicly-avowed and committed Communist intellectual, the process of transformation is more complex. He must find reasons to account for his rejection of the coherent Marxist philosophy. He may have joined the party unobtrusively and clandestinely, but when he defects he finds it necessary to make official announcements accompanied by passionate accusations. Almost always, at the point of departure, he takes the "sins" of the October Revolution. In the case of Fast, as we have seen, the rationale was provided by the Khrushchev report. The latter, he claims, acted as the catalyst for his break with Communism.

But Fast is far from truthful in citing his stricken conscience and moral dilemmas as the main reason for his break. The Khrushchev document as will be shown, merely served as a trigger for releasing long-smouldering personal hatreds and inner emotional tensions of a mind torn by psychoneurotic conflicts. He admits, for example, that he "had ceased paying dues or engaging in any regular functions of a party member more than a year before" (before the Khrushchev Report).

To begin with, Fast was aware that he could have criticized the Soviet Union and stayed in the party, or that he could have left the party while remaining loyal to the cause of socialism as well as the goals and principles for which he admits American Communists have fought bravely. He avoided these alternatives by employing the Khrushchev Report as a means of turning the Soviet Union from a symbol of man's aspiration into evil incarnate.

Finding a pretext for turning against the Soviet Union, however, was only a part of Fast's problem. More difficult was the dissolving of his relationship with the group with which he was associated and the people he considered friends and with whom he had worked in pursuit of a common, concrete program. The American Communist Party had not committed any crimes. In six years of investigations and trials the United States Government could not cite a single illegal, immoral act by any American Communist leader. Is a man to desert comrades because of mistakes in a fraternal party in another country?

Fast had been associated closely with members of the party in many struggles. As he admits in his book, he had developed a warm, fraternal relationship with numerous American Communists whom he characterizes as courageous, gentle and of integrity. Even a warped conscience must have flinched at publicly deserting and denouncing friends and at betraying one's group at the most critical moment of its existence. Moreover, Fast was determined not merely to leave the Party, but to join its persecutors. The enormity of this treason required an impressive alibi.

Fast resolves this problem by conjuring up an imagined crucifixion of himself by his own comrades. This death theme, recurring throughout his confessional, is a principal leitmotif in Fast's attempted justification of his renegacy. "If the American party leaders had the power of execution I, too, would not have been alive today," he solemnly declares. (The death theme serves as a means for destroying the leaders while heralding his own resurrection.) To impart his bizarre hypothesis with the aura of finality he writes of "the pattern of death as the final outcome of iconoclasm being a built-in part of the Communist Party structure" and defines the party as "an organizational pattern wedded to torture, brutality and death."

Fast thus accuses the leaders of all Communist parties of being actual or potential assassins, and he directs his charge not against individual leaders but against the organization in its entirety.

Is Fast attempting to project his own hatred to the others? ["It is not I who hates him but he who hates me."] Or is he trying to assassinate the character of his former comrades to free himself of his own self-contempt? Throughout his confessional he looks upon himself with loathing. Such self-contempt leaves little room for personal loyalties.

At any rate, Fast plunges headlong into the demonology of the late Joseph Goebbels and Joseph R. McCarthy. "The depths of degradation," said Juvenal, "are not reached in one step." The Latin poet could not have imagined the speed with which some ex-Communist intellectuals turn upon their former moral principles. In February, 1957, Fast, on announcing his resignation from the Communist Party, declared "I am neither anti-Soviet or anti-Communist." Eight months later he compared Communism with Fascism and called for the destruction of all communist parties. There is a logic to this spectacular but rather common regression of the emotional renegade from Communism. Communism and Fascism are polar opposites. Bitter hostility to the one or the other ultimately impels the adoption of attitudes of the opposite camp.

In Fast, this radical swing is evidenced in his wild charges about the American Communist Party. "The terrible, terrible (Khrushchev) speech," he writes, "became a reality for us not because of what had happened in Russia but because of our own experiences in the Communist Party of the United States." In his book, Fast relates experiences with Party leaders as proof of his claim. What were the crimes these leaders committed?

"In 1945," he relates, "I had many unique discussions with many top men in the Indian party." On his return he visited Eugene Dennis, the General Secretary of the American Party who, "had never seen me before." Dennis, however, didn't "inquire as to my health" and "nothing of what I had to say interested him. He merely dismissed me with an impatient wave of his hand, as if he would brush dirt aside. . . . Never in all my life," he concludes, "have I experienced such shame and indignity."

In 1945 Fast had just joined the Communist Party. He was neither commissioned nor qualified to conduct "unique discussions" with top men of the Indian Communist Party. Moreover, to protect themselves against provocateurs, communist parties strictly forbid members to act in liaison or speak in the name of their party in foreign countries. Fast should have been rebuked. Did the ambitious Fast seek out the "top" men in India in order to promote himself as a newcomer with the top men in the American party? And why should a man's impatient wave of the hand have provoked in Fast the feeling that he is dirt? This trifling incident still sears Fast as "one of the greatest indignities I have ever experienced." Dennis' gesture punctured the vanity of the self-promoter.

Dennis committed another "crime" in 1950 after his appearance before the un-American Committee. John Gates, former editor of the *Daily Worker*, had promised Washington reporters that Dennis would issue a statement of national importance. But Dennis merely announced that some years ago he had spent some time in China where he was sent "by the American people." The disappointed reporters did not view

this as a statement of national importance. They were probably only mildly perturbed by the incident, accustomed as they are to the more vacuous and inane statements of "national importance" frequently issued by Washintgon leaders at press conferences. But in Fast's hyperbole this incident becomes "a horrible story to put in print. The horror through the years has been felt by many of us. . . . We bore the onus of our national leader. So utterly blasted was our normal process of reasoning that we were even unable to talk to each other. . . . Mournfully and slowly we walked through the streets of Washington." More significant of his future development was Fast's statement to his fellow reporters, "What does one do when he is part of a movement, the leader of which is either an idiot or a madman?" But, without compunction, on April 15, 1956, six years later, Fast wrote in a review of Dennis' *Letters From Prison* in the *Daily Worker*: "Eugene Dennis is a very brave man and his courage comes out of good things, out of gentleness and love and compassion."

Unable to sully the character of individual Communists with concrete evidence, Fast resorts to the trick of drawing an impressionistic composite picture of an abstract Communist leader. He prefaces it with the remark, "I have seen many hundreds of him in many lands and have observed him with some care." (The latter statement is a gross exaggeration. Outside the U.S.A. and perhaps India, he saw few of the leading foreign Communists.) The "diabolical" traits of this composite leader as delineated by Fast are as follows: "He has a cold and aloof quality. . . . He is careful whenever he speaks or writes. . . . He puffs his pipe knowingly and never says a word. . . . He can sit for hours calmly listening to opinions. . . . He tries to establish a reputation as a democratic fellow, as a man of calm and patience." But "he humiliates his opponents . . . is withering in his scorn and terrifying in his condemnation," only when "he is certain that his opponent is sunk, outclassed and isolated. . . . He quotes Marx and Engels to back up his position. . . . He couches the party line in a priestly gobbledegook which is a substitution for the

normal language of his native land. . . . He is never an intellectual. . . . His equipment is a smattering of ignorance . . . and he is without taste and standards of judgment in matters of art and literature." The party leader, he writes, "is not an impressive man for in the party men are not judged by bourgeois standards. . . . He is the inevitable product of the party in any land where the party is a Stalinist structure and it is he who dirties the pages of history and blackens the colors of man's dreams."

Who are these unimpressive individuals? Presumably none other than William Z. Foster, Mao Tse-tung, Nikita Khrushchev, Luis Prestes, Ho Chi-Minh, Maurice Thorez, Chou En-lai, Palmiro Togliatti, or perhaps women like Dolores Ibarruri or Elizabeth Gurley Flynn? These individuals who dedicated their lives to the struggle against war and fascism are the ones, according to Fast's new yardstick, who dirty the pages of history. Yet Fast ought to be more circumspect. Even by bourgeois standards, these Communist leaders are anything but unimpressive men. A shrewd anti-Communist never belittles the demons he is out to slay.

But even if one were to concede that traits or bureaucratic habits of some Communist leaders are repulsive, is a world movement embracing diverse peoples and races challenging all the values of the established order, transforming the life of one-third of mankind, whose impact is felt in every part of the globe, to be judged by the personal traits of some of its leaders? * Would a worker judge the overall achievements of his trade union or desert his fellow workers because some union leaders have proven themselves corrupt or incompetent? Should the colonial peoples turn their backs upon their national liberation movements because the behavior of some of their leaders is still somewhat uncouth as com-

* In his book, *False Witness*, the willing and then regretful FBI informer, Harvey Matusow relates how feelings of pique and rejection at the hands of Communist leaders, led him to active renegacy: "The mechanical approach toward me that I found in many Party leaders, the absolutist attitude, disillusioned me with the Party. The resentment for a few grew into one against the Communist Party as a whole."

pared to the polished and civilized deportment of their white masters in Paris, London or Johannesburg? Is the struggle of the oppressed and the exploited to be postponed for this reason?

Frequently this is what the perfectionist bourgeois intellectual demands after joining the cause of the exploited and oppressed. "During their temporary alignment with revolutionary forces, such intellectual-aristocrats remain, at bottom, philosophically idealists. Seeing ideas and intellect as primary, they become detached from the real determining forces of society. . . . Desertion of the struggle leads to apologies and rationalization of their renegacy, and to action, at last—in defense of reaction," wrote V. J. Jerome. In reference to such intellectuals, Mao Tse-tung once declared, "The cleanest people in the world are the workers and peasants. Even though their hands may be soiled and their feet smeared with cow dung, nevertheless they are cleaner than the bourgeoisie."

Although embittered against the Communist leaders and recommending the destruction of the Communist Party, Fast paradoxically is still entranced by the human qualities of Communist Party members (Is this a matter of strategy? Something like Dulles professing love for the Russian people?). At any rate, here is how Fast describes the Communist rank and file: "The majority are sincere, scrupulously honest and dedicated people. . . . The bravest men and women I have ever known . . . most skillful fighters for men's freedom. . . . They face endless difficulties. Their work is volunteer work in the purest sense. . . . They work tirelessly and with intense dedication." The functionaries "are as honest and dedicated as the members." He quotes a "burly Irishman" as saying "the Party gives to a worker the only hope and sustenance he had ever known" and Fast adds, "never in so small a group have I seen so many pure souls, so many gentle, endlessly sacrificing people, so many men and women of utter integrity." Of the same calibre are the tens of millions of Communists in Russia, China, Italy, France, India, Japan, Indonesia, and other lands.

However, Marxism everywhere attracts the intelligent as well as the honest and the gentle. It is a system of thought which glorifies science and reason, and distrusts blind emotion. Only the Marxist analysis provides a coherent scientific explanation for the deepening economic political and cultural crisis of world capitalism and its growing dependence, in this century, upon armaments, fascism and war as a means for its survival. Among workers it is, therefore, the more art-crises of world capitalism and its growing dependence, in oriented toward the more logical, scientific disciplines (physicists, mathematicians), and among students it is generally the alert, questioning and more intelligent who become Marxists. All this reflects upon the humanism and all embracing rationality of Marxist philosophy.

The greatest testimony to the validity of Marxism-Leninism is the fact that its ideas have transformed a country of appalling backwardness into one of the culturally and scientifically most advanced nations in the world. Further evidence of the historical pertinence of Marxist thought can be seen in the following: Marxists warned mankind of the coming of the First World War; of all political parties, only Communists worked ceaselessly to warn and mobilize mankind against the dangers of Fascism and the coming of the Second World War; and today once more, it is the Communists who are the vanguard in the struggle for world peace and in warning mankind of the consequences of a third world war.

Even the record of the American Communist Party, though handicapped by some serious inner-party defects, as well as by unfavorable circumstances, is an impressive one. Consisting only of a few tens of thousands of members, it disseminated millions of books and pamphlets which left an indelible imprint upon the thinking of great numbers of Americans and upon American cultural, political and economic life. It propelled the organization of numerous trade unions, inspired a whole series of Roosevelt New Deal legislation, and movements for Negro and civil rights, better housing and education and stood in the forefront of the struggle against war hysteria and McCarthyism.

What Howard Fast and other ex-Communists who call for the destruction of all Communist parties fail to analyze, much less to understand, is *the nature and origin of their own inner conflict*. How do their complex, contradictory attitudes toward the party, Communism and the Soviet Union arise? In the main their anguished mental-emotional gyrations grow out of a certain personalized love-hate relationship to world events, like the attitude of those who regard storms or a good harvest as happening because of the anger or favor of the gods. In the case of the ex-Communists the gods or the demons, naked or clothed, are the Communist Party leaders. (The Stalin cult itself was an expression of the persistence and survival of this primitive attitude). The impassioned hatred of these intellectuals toward the Communist leader arises, therefore, from their inadequate understanding of the nature of the historical process itself. Leaders are shaped by the tasks which the social forces that raised them to leadership impose upon them. And feelings regarding the actual movement of historical events, their contradictions, unevenness and complexity, are often transferred to the leaders heading these movements.

Concretely, how do honest, intelligent members and leaders of a movement dedicated to the abolition of war, oppression and injustice, develop a narrowness akin to religious fanaticism? How do its leaders, themselves self-sacrificing and motivated by humanist goals, become unjust?

The answer lies in the very words "dedicated" and "self-sacrificing," traits which arise out of a sense of the total righteousness of the cause one represents. Total righteousness confronts total evil; peace, culture, science, and the equality of peoples, confront the total evil of international murder, racial bestiality, the dog-eat-dog degradation of man. Total righteousness arises out of the vision of what the peoples of the world could accomplish were industry, science and technology not perverted by the private monopolies for their anti-social ends. Total righteousness, confronting every conceivable lie, calumny and brutality, inevitably becomes harsh and fanatical.

The majority of Communist leaders are former members of the working class. Whatever the negative personal traits of these leaders, they were not formed by Communism or the party, as maintained by Fast. They were shaped by the impact of the total environment, by experiences from childhood and early youth onward. All of them, even Soviet leaders born after the Revolution are products of the old order for they still carry the wounds and the scars which that order inflicted upon them. The errors committed by Rakosi as head of the Hungarian Party may perhaps be traced to the sixteen years he spent in solitary confinement in a four-by-eight cell in a fascist prison. Other Communist leaders went through equally harrowing experiences.

Some bourgeois commentators recently expressed their wonderment at the "hard Moscow line" still pursued by Czechoslovakia's Communists. What these commentators ignore is the proximity of this country to the West German imperialists who executed over 60,000 Communists during their last visit to Czechoslovakia. The recently deceased President of Czechoslovakia, Antonin Zapotocky and his present successor, A. Novotny, each spent six years in the Mauthausen Nazi death camp.

Only the most exceptional individuals could engage in such unrelenting struggles. Under the intense pressures, however, these people at times succumb to feelings of hate and suspicion.

The failure to understand the dynamics of a socialist revolution frequently results in the glorification of the early phases of the revolution and the rejection of its later stages. Initially, when the socialist movement was still weak and its aspirations were regarded as utopian, the attacks upon it by the old order were relatively mild. Liberals often hail this period as the "pure, idealist" stage of the Marxist movement. Its leaders were still uncontaminated by acts of injustice. However, as the idea turned into a concrete social force all the weapons of the old order were organized to destroy it. The real ordeal of the historically new, did not begin until it had won political power. Then it was tested

in ordeals of fire and blood. After the new order had grown into a world system, the old order posed the threat of world annihilation. To survive, the movement whose goal is the brotherhood of man, was compelled to forge its own sword. Its cutting edge had to be hard and single-minded—the steeled, monolithic party leadership. And thus it came about that the rational could become warped by the blind and irrational. Every revolution has been pursued by this contradiction.

Apparently not realizing the meaning of his own words, Fast writes (while speculating on the possible outcome of a third world war):

“Only the fanatical structure of the Communist Party will survive the holocaust as a functioning organization capable of some sort of organization.” What he fails to understand is that this “fanatical structure” grew out of the holocaust of forty years of bitter war and war threats. The “fanatical structure” certainly cannot be replaced nor wither so long as there are people determined upon destroying Communism with the fire of hydrogen bombs.

Such are the inflexible dictates of a world wherein forward social change is opposed by force and violence. The October Revolution consolidated its rule after sustaining the cruelest agonies the old order was able to impose on it. Because of this, the first workers’ state moved forward amidst a diversity of conflicts and contradictions. Its stupendous construction projects, involving hundreds of millions of people, carried out under the most difficult circumstances imaginable, were attended with error, corruption and calamity.

If, as Engels stated, all class societies still belong to the kingdom of the beast, then the first stage of socialism is only the beginning of the period of transition to the kingdom of the human—a beginning that will take an entire historical epoch to complete. In the meantime, the new is still afflicted with features of the old. In advancing, it must still carry the burdens imposed by the old—war losses, astronomical arms expenditures—and ward off the rot of the old system surrounding it.

The wonder is that so much that is new has been able to develop and thrive under these circumstances. The new strength of Socialism in relation to the war forces has now enlarged its capacity for criticizing itself. Herein lay the real significance of the excoriating Khrushchev Report which was followed by a broad peace offensive, enormous technological achievements, and mounting Soviet confidence in their ability to achieve peaceful co-existence.

PART IV

It would appear from a cursory reading of the *Naked God* that Fast's passionate renegacy was caused by his disillusionment with the Soviet Union and the American Communist Party. However, Fast unwittingly reveals that there was a profounder motivation. He was already experiencing uncertainty about the path he had chosen, while still publicly expressing himself as a dedicated believer in socialism. "From the very beginning of my party experience I began to accumulate a store of hatred," he writes. He admits that he had begun contemplating leaving the Party as early as 1947.

Fast's singling out of this year—1947—is significant. This was the year of the beginning of the Cold War and an intensified anti-Communist repression. Fast reveals the tragic impact upon him of this new current in American life, declaring: "The more troubles, the more hurt and sickened I became. . . . At Peekskill I almost welcomed death as the one certainty I could distill from the continuing nightmare. . . . Fear was my companion day and night, fear of the ugly gods that had entered my life, fear of arrest, fear of assault, fear that harm might come to my children, fear of prison, fear of some stool-pigeon who would begin to invent his lies about me, fear of frame-up. . . ."

Exposed here is the dramatic conflict between the gallant anti-fascist and the panic-stricken, self-preoccupied hysteric. Psychologists know that fear is inextricably bound up with hatred. People experiencing strong fears because of membership in a persecuted group do, under some conditions, develop a certain revulsion or hatred for that group.

No maligned, hunted or persecuted minority, whether of a political or religious character, is ever free of this fear-hate complex. (The fanatical, suspicious, dogmatic and other

unpleasant traits often displayed by some leaders and members of harrassed minority groups, are manifestations of that fear-hate complex). The resulting inner conflict between loyalty and apostasy, integrity and betrayal assumes the form of a love-hate duel. In the course of this inner struggle, the unremitting pressure and agony sustained because of association with the oppressed group, can induce self-reproach and even emotions of self-hatred.

The defector may begin to regard his group as it is depicted by the enemy—inferior, malevolent and repulsive. He indicts and vilifies it while deserting it. In the effort to sever all ties with the former attachment, the former victim turns into a prosecutor. Thus ex-Catholics are frequently frenzied and infuriated anti-Catholics. Similarly some of the most vicious anti-Semites are apostate Jews afflicted with self-hatred. Indeed, several of these even provided ideological weapons for the Nazi race theorists.

The fears and tensions engendered by the Cold War broke Fast's spirit, and this was soon to show itself. He was compelled to resolve the conflict of conscience, principle and self-respect against the urgent desire of escaping from his terrifying nightmare which he has described above. On the one hand was the prospect of winning freedom and security. On the other side, there was the continuing torments and burdens of retaining his allegiance to Communism. This emotional struggle determined the demoralized, maudlin, "sackcloth and ashes" character of his desertion. On the day he read the Khrushchev Report, "I felt that at long last I was released. I came awake. The fear stopped. . . . I had awakened from a long and terrible nightmare. . . . I now stand naked myself," he writes. After an orgy of exhibitionism, the wretched sinner stands as a penitent, naked, humble saint.

Fast seeks to portray himself as a martyr to the cause he had been serving. He flogs himself in public and refers constantly to the great sacrifices he had made, beatifying himself for having given his life to the cause of mankind. But what was it which this man, whose arrogance is as unconscious as it is enormous, calls sacrifice?

Early in his book he tells us that he was "compelled to surrender his youth" working at "dismal under-paid jobs," and that he "could not see for himself any future as a writer" and felt "frustrated and truncated."

After joining the Communist Party when it was not unpopular to do so, his fortunes began to zoom. The Party at that time had 80,000 members and a large and sympathetic reading public. Though some critics noted the unevenness and superficiality of some of his work, his works were hailed by the Communists the world over, and justly so, for their contributions to the cause of peace and progress, for their effort to sustain a humanist content amid the cynicism of a good deal of contemporary literature. The Party helped distribute his books. He exploited this praise and, as he admits, became "comparatively wealthy" while "sacrificing his life" to the cause of mankind. What a desecration of the word "sacrifice" when one thinks of the sacrifices made by men like Julius Fuchik, Garcia Lorca, and Gabriel Peri, not to speak of countless others who gave much, everything, in poverty, in suffering and death for the cause of man.

But his thirst for flattery, for reward, for canonization became insatiable, so that he could not brook the slightest criticism or anything less than fervent hero-worship. The mildest and most respectful criticism drove him to fury and brought threats of resignation. He still resents, for example, after eight years, a mild demurrer by a *Daily Worker* critic concerning the ending of his *Spartacus*, at the close of a lengthy review fulsome in its applause for the book as a whole. He does not hesitate to tell his reader that this quite legitimate questioning by a reviewer "caused my mental and moral destruction," and caused "the spark of life and the flame of passion to vanish" from his writings. Not content with the millions of copies the Soviets issued of his works, he flays them bitterly for not translating his *My Glorious Brothers*. He is not above letting the publisher of his latest book boast that he is the "most widely read novelist in the world," discreetly omitting the fact that what had made him so were the enormous editions published by the socialist gov-

ernments and communist parties on which he now hurls his curses.

Turning to Soviet literature, he writes that "The Communist Party of the Soviet Union has destroyed Russian literature," carefully selecting a mediocre novel, *Guarantee For Peace*, by Vadin Sobko as his exhibit. He speaks of it as a "perversion of reality" and says that "everyone in the book behaves like the children in Mrs. Prim's Academy for young prigs." He argues that one would have to seek far in the U.S.A. for books as bad as Sobko's, and he cites Mickey Spillane's poisonous output as an analogue, though he argues that Spillane literature must be endured by a free society. The reasoning is shabby and the alternative unreal. It is a distortion to pose the choice of Sobko's banalities or Spillane's brutalities, though his rage at the former seems far greater than his revulsion at the latter. But is Sobko typical of all Soviet literature? Is socialism to be trampled on because it has printed enormous editions of *Fast*, but has failed to produce another *War and Peace*? Are the strivings of Soviet literature, both successful and unsuccessful, to be understood only with reference to the alleged tyrannies of censors and not also in relation to the enormously complex problems of a rapidly changing socialist society still facing a menacingly hostile environment? Has Western literature any present-day *War and Peace* to show? Unless *Fast* considers his own work in this category, in which case it would have to be noted that he wrote the great body of his work under the sponsorship, and with the active help, of the socialist movement he now spurns.

Indeed the artistic level of Russian literature suffered during the rigorous Stalin period; but tens of millions of new readers were educated to a higher level by the huge editions of Russian classics published, and by the respect taught to the Soviet youth for all the classics of world literature as well as their own. What was lost in depth was at least partially compensated for in width.*

* Isaac Deutscher, the historian and critic of the Stalin period, wrote: "The works of Gogol, Pushkin, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Belinsky and others

And although Fast writes off the "vicious and immoral content" of the Spillane literature (he had also quite rightly denounced a good deal of other present day writing as decadent), this did not prevent him from doing a "Spillane" on his own "in the interests of making a living," as he explains. Fast calls this work, *The Fallen Angel*, an "entertainment" which the "party harpies" seized upon for attacking him. But he does not specify the unrestrained brutality and sexual degradation he manufactured in a dubious plot about espionage by an East European country against the United States. A charming "entertainment" for Cold War readers!

A movement seeking social change requires discipline. Such a movement under attack will possibly develop excesses of its own. Fast grants that he himself made bitter attacks upon other Left writers, but he does not examine the political atmosphere which could lead to this. He cannot assert that he himself was ever the object of such an attack, though he struck out wildly at such writers as Hemingway on the ground that Hemingway could not write English. In private talks, he did not hesitate to refer to himself as the American Gorki, always reminding his listeners of the size of his editions. Yet he was not happy with writers like Mike Gold whom he calls "a damn fool." Gold had praised him as a truly national writer in previous columns. The jaunty, boisterous Fast felt uneasy in the presence of working class writers or personalities like Mike Gold, for such men work for a pittance and do not make money their obsession.

He began to develop persecution delusions even as his clamor for adulation increased and would not be satisfied. During the McCarthyite period Fast, overwrought and hysterical, began to suspect colleagues of being FBI police agents. In one instance he begged forgiveness from a prominent

. . . have literally been pressed into the hands of the youth in millions of copies. . . . The ideal promulgated in the Soviet Union, even under Stalinism, is not domination of man by man, or nation by nation, or race by race, but their fundamental equality. There have been many positive and valuable elements in the educational influence of Stalinism—elements that in the long run are likely to turn against its own worse features." (*Stalin*, by I. Deutscher, Oxford Univ. Press).

Leftwing writer he had accused wrongly, writing "I really don't know what to say or how to say it. I feel humble, rather stupid and very angry at myself. . . . It's high time I grew up." It does not occur to him that his own hysterical accusations could have had a counterpart in the socialist countries, and that the solution is not an assault on socialism but on hysteria and its fomenters.

Fast had sought in the working class movement a balm for an admittedly unbalanced personality; when he joined the party, he writes, "My own life was meaningless, senseless, hopeless and degraded." The tense party atmosphere, especially during the decade of fierce repression, certainly could offer no cure for such frayed nerves and such a lacerated personality. Yet he immediately assumed the posture of a party leader and educator, spurning suggestions that he educate himself first. He began inevitably to feel that his views were not appreciated. But he admits that he paid little attention to the views of others, asserting "I had the reputation of an independent, uncontrollable element."

However, Fast's emotional reactions to political events and his pretensions at morality are still not the full explanation for his renegacy. His passionate rage and his Olympian wrestling are rooted in more earthy problems.

"I drained myself and my family of all our savings," he moans in an outburst of self pity. "I gave thousands of dollars but it was not enough. I lost a great deal of money—all the money I saved. . . . At great cost and financial loss I had to publish my own books. Publishing the books of other Communists who were blacklisted cost me thousands of dollars. From comparative wealth and success I was reduced to a struggle for existence." This statement provides the real clue to the primary and most basic conflict that was raging within Fast—the tug-of-war between principle and bank account, Communist and businessman, writer with flayed conscience and morals in the middle. Quite a brawl!

With the start of the Cold War repressions, books by Communist writers were banned, hidden or burned. Fast's books stopped selling. He had, however, in the meanwhile acquired

secretaries, maids, cars and an expensive home. "If I can't make money, I won't write a single line," he began to say angrily. He began to regard himself as an institution requiring direct Party aid. He sought the help of progressives whose resources were now being drained by the Smith Act persecutions and deportation cases. He began to feel that Party leaders, facing jail, and themselves close to destitution, were callous to his needs.

Facing bankruptcy, Fast began entreating loans and subsidies from wealthy people to supplement the shrinking income from his publishing ventures. Before long, however, he was approached by a number of generous people, among them millionaire brokers and insurance men with Wall Street connections. On the part of these millionaires it was likely a matter of investing in the future good will of a "promising client," as businessmen are wont to say. On his part, was it a case of exchanging harsh and "discredited" Communist moral values for a bit of cold cash? For lucrative TV, radio, publisher's and Hollywood royalties? Perhaps only vulgar materialists or cynics would maintain that these considerations provided more than the final push to Fast's debacle. Still, who in today's conformist America would condemn a man, sinking under debts and mortgages, for saving both his soul and his bank account by resigning from a small, isolated and, as he calls it, "unpopular" political party?

PART V

The main problem with which Fast is concerned in *The Naked God* is to disengage himself fully from his past in order to launch a new career. For Hollywood, for example, Fast must cleanse himself sufficiently to be acceptable under the blacklist. Mere recantation and repentance are not enough. He must show what impelled him to the "original sin" of joining the Communist Party and then explain why he continued in the party.

Why did Fast join the party? Was it out of intellectual conviction? Had he studied Marxist philosophy? No, far from it. Indeed, he points to his ideological virginity. He claims that he was drawn to the party in rebellion against his own conditions during the depression. Other youth in rebellion, he states, turned to drink, sex and crime. By such a superficial explanation, he seeks to avoid the suspicion of having been drawn to the party out of intellectual conviction. Instead, he prudently excoriates Marxism without ever analyzing its content, pleading "All I'm trying is to explain Marxism as a force which attracts the hungry, the poor . . . it is not my intention to discuss Socialism either practically or theoretically."

His disclaimer becomes pathetic. "I was pressed by the need of utter poverty. I earned twenty-five cents an hour. I worked at dismal and underpaid jobs. . . . I surrendered my childhood . . . I came to the left movement out of my own poverty and hunger and despair . . . I had been alone in a confusion, a frustration." A poor slum kid who took to Communism instead of booze or dope!

Fifteen years, however, seem too long a time to remain duped even for a bewildered mind like Fast's. If the Party as he now claims, was a fraud, and his goal was "the

brotherhood of man," why didn't he quit and join, say, the Theosophists who profess similar aims? The *New Republic* reviewer of Fast's book, Irving Howe, queries irascibly: "What was it that held him for so long a time? Why so late?" And he warns: "Men like Fast cannot avoid answering if they are to finish the painful task of earning their freedom." He calls Fast's silence on this crucial question "disingenuous." Howe is not just cavilling, for he wants Fast to clear up this apparent riddle. If Communism is what Fast claims it is, Fast was either deliberately deceiving himself and others when he wrote as a Communist for almost fifteen years, or he is lying now as an ex-Communist.

Fast admits that he was impelled to join the Party "because I no longer could see any future as a writer." Did he also leave it for the same reason? Did he remain for as long as the party was able to furnish him with a lucrative market for his books? No, the self-justifications are more involved. Fast claims that he could not leave the party. He was a captive, trapped by sinister forces, held by demons whose infernal system of discipline compelled obedience and submission.

"Basic party discipline," he writes, "is exercised by the sword of expulsion. What keeps the whole structure from shattering to bits is first and foremost a religious, mystical terror of expulsion. Expulsion from the Party was akin to eternal damnation—the body alive but the soul already dead for eternity. Millions of non-Communists considered anyone who wore the label of expulsion from the Party as a lost and damned soul, a corrupted and dangerous human being who no longer owned the right of admission to the society of good will. . . . Expulsion was as bad as death and sometimes worse."

Once more Fast's persistent self-pity leads him to take refuge in a fictionalized death theme. He was teetering on the edge of eternal damnation when he joined the party, and then cursed beyond redemption and pursued by a fate worse than death, thereafter.

But the picture he draws is a falsification. In the last de-

cedes some 250,000 Americans, among them many intellectuals and writers, voluntarily joined and voluntarily left the American Communist Party. Some 70,000 of these left the Party between 1946 and 1956 as a result of the rising anti-Communist repressions. Expulsion, a rare practice, was employed only in cases involving gross violations of Party rules and policies or against those suspected of being provocateurs and FBI agents. In any event, expulsion could be practiced only against someone who insisted on remaining in the Party. Obviously, those who left or resigned could not be expelled. Moreover, only a dedicated Communist, one utterly convinced that the Party represents the noblest cause on earth, would regard expulsion as tragically as Fast describes it. But if it were such a tragedy for him, his submission to Party discipline must have resulted primarily from his inner convictions and not from the fear of expulsion.

"The expelled Communist," writes Fast, "became a leper heretic." But who is a leper to whom? To the rulers of Bonn or Washington, it is a Pablo Neruda, a Louis Aragon or a Paul Robeson. To those of Moscow or Peking it is a Whitaker Chambers or a Budenz, and now Howard Fast. Was not Fast a leper and an outcast to the literary page editors of the *New York Times* or the *Saturday Review* so long as he wrote stories extolling peace, anti-fascism and the struggle of the oppressed? Not until he began defaming the movement propagating these ideals was the ban against his name removed. Having changed sides, does he expect that those whom he deserted and betrayed should now regard him as anything but indecent and a scoundrel?

His funereal outbursts on the theme of expulsion are, however, not without significance. Somewhere in his subliminal self, he is terrified by the judgment decent people confer upon deserters and turncoats. He apparently is begging not to be viewed by millions of non-Communists "as a body alive but the soul already dead."

No! Not dead. A man like Fast, once sensitive to the fate of the oppressed and exploited, and now turned against his former self, though shattered and agonized, is not easily

destroyed. He tears his soul into shreds, parts of the former self decompose, but the over-all process of decay is a painful, protracted one.

"When a Communist leaves the Party," he writes, "he must travel through a special purgatory." No, not every Communist. A great many people have for one reason or another left the Communist Party soberly, decently without heaping abuse on themselves or on others. A great many of them still maintain their Marxist heritage or are non-Communist progressives. It is only the self-seeking ex-Communist who is compelled to mutilate his former self to the point of non-recognition. To gain his new sanctuary, he must wed himself to the furies of anti-Communism. It is they who stoke the fires of his purgatory. For the task of eliminating patterns of thought which reality and daily events reaffirm is painfully complex. The ex-Communist wields his hatchet, hacking desperately and unsparingly. But in vain. Some remnant stubbornly resists uprooting. Revolted by everything reminding him of his past, he seeks to bury it. But it continues to re-emerge. He engages in repeated public post-mortems of his former self. This spectacle of constant self-immolation becomes tedious even to non-Communists.

The non-Communist, although opposed to Communism, can discern and admit whatever is praiseworthy about the Socialist countries. But the articulate ex-Communist is doomed to a life-long ordeal of compulsive, stereotyped hatred, to the Sisyphean task of erasing the historically indelible, of cursing a large sector of humanity while tearing at his dead and rotting double.

PART VI

Friendly critics of *The Naked God* expressed astonishment at its poverty of ideas and wondered about the effacement of the world view that had presumably anchored this man for so long to the Communist movement. Sensing this evasion, Fast covers himself by stating, "I find it almost impossible . . . making an orderly procession of thought, ideas and conclusions." Though possessing a creative imagination, he seems incapable of reasoning in terms of causal relations. Such reasoning requires dealing with the truth or falsehood of ideas, relating them to facts and circumstances or weighing them in the light of tested knowledge. But Fast is only concerned with emotional effects by piling up a flood of untamed images, rambling conjectures and false analogies, rumors, gossip and invective.

The overall impression is of a violent eruption, debris, turmoil and shipwreck.

In some places, nevertheless, he attempts an ideological rationale. But no sooner does he trespass the border separating imagination from conceptual thinking than he reveals not only an ignorance of contemporary history but also an astounding incapacity for expressing a cogent political idea.

In four places he insists, "this is not a record of disillusionment nor am I bitter or depressed." In eight places he maintains, "I cannot write without heart sickness, hatred, horror and anger."

When he is compelled to account for the nobility and heroism of Communists like those who fought in Spain he declares that they were "*products of their time.*" On the other hand, when it suits his purpose he attributes the ignoble traits of some Communists to their being "*products of the party structure.*"

In one of the most egregious absurdities he writes "The Nazi party was in concert with the tone of the society it ruled while the Communist Party, wherever socialism existed as an economic system, faces an enormous contradiction between itself and the socialist society it feeds upon." Thus the Soviet or Chinese Communist parties which propel the building of the Socialist society by unceasingly expanding its material and cultural wealth and sponsoring world-wide peace movements, are allegedly more antagonistic to the people's interests than was the Nazi party which degraded and plundered the German as well as other peoples. Even former Defense Secretary, Charles E. Wilson, admitted to a House Committee on Armaments that "Soviet Russia, unlike Nazi Germany, is seeking to achieve a growing mass welfare and is not war oriented." (*New York Times*, May 20, 1956).

"The reason colonial peoples struggling for freedom," Fast declares, "are backed by Communism, proves nothing except that Russia is a good deal cleverer than we are in the present power struggle." As though Washington's obtuse policies toward the colonial and semi-colonial countries were not due to the fears of Caltex, Standard Oil, Aramco and other American monopolies of losing colonial profits and investments!

"It is a fact," he writes, "that Khrushchev must know that war offers one of the very few possibilities for uniting all factions in Russian behind him." He thus insinuates that the Soviet Union may unleash a war. This is the kind of Cold War slander even William Randolph Hearst, Jr. denied in a recent series of articles following his visit to Russia. The Soviet Union, Hearst pointed out, is now ruled by the Communist Party as a whole, whose precepts no leader, including Khrushchev, could violate without being removed from his post. According to Fast, it would seem that Khrushchev's purpose in his repeated proposals for establishing peaceful co-existence, is to disunite the Soviet peoples!

Consumed with corrosive hatred against the socialist countries Fast is no longer satisfied with exaggeration and hyperbole. He daubs every incident with sinister and diabolic allu-

sions. He tells of a luncheon that he and the editors of *Mainstream* attended at the invitation of a Rumanian ambassador. While in the restaurant the latter became "terrified and aghast at the suggestion that his chauffeur who remained in the ambassadorial limousine join us for lunch." "We wrested down our anger," Fast writes and generalizes, "such are the niceties of Communist practices."

Even if the Rumanian ambassador has been acting like a bourgeois dandy, the sarcastic allegation "such are the niceties of Communist practices," is untenable. Could the new Rumania, beset by all kinds of shortages, dispense with the talented services of a man still afflicted with some bourgeois habits? Are not the "niceties of Communist practice" to be sought in the elimination of the incredible poverty, the epidemics, the 90 per cent illiteracy, the utterly corrupt oligarchy, or the ten thousand brothels that formerly infested Rumania? In the remarkably rapid advance of industry and culture and a thousand other "niceties" of Communism?*

Characteristic of Fast's state of mind is the incredible conclusion he derives from this minor incident with the Rumanian ambassador. "From this," he writes, "I was able to put together the story of anti-Semitism, brute terror and firing squad and the knotted whip in socialist Rumania!"

Of the scores of correspondents who traveled in People's Democratic Rumania, none reported anything remotely resembling Fast's lying assertion. As for the Jews of Rumania, they possess their own press, theaters, schools and other cultural institutions. In October, 1957, the Rumanian Government issued over two hundred invitations to Jewish cultural representatives of some fifteen countries to participate in a Yiddish theater festival celebrating the 100th Anniversary of A. Goldfaden, a pioneer Yiddish playwright. At the festival held in December of that year, a magnificent new Jewish theater was dedicated in Bucharest, a city formerly raked by pogroms. Thus, the abstract moralist, sensing only the demands of his proud and always righteous ego, turns into the enemy of the good.

* See *The New Rumania*, by Ben Zion Liber. New York, 1958.

Fast is particularly incensed about the pro-Arab stand taken by the Soviets in the conflict between the awakening Arab peoples and their Western antagonists. To him this momentous anti-imperialist struggle is nothing but a perverse Soviet-inspired conspiracy against Israel. He writes: "Since Russia is involved in the power struggle for Middle East oil, she looks upon any growth of Israel as a threat to her own interests."

Actually, the Soviet bloc was the first to support Israel's independence, furnishing it with weapons during the most critical phase of its independence struggle, and was among the first to recognize it as a state. The U.S.S.R. concluded trade pacts with Israel and supplied it with many raw materials including oil. (These deliveries were stopped after the joint Israeli-French-British attack on Egypt). "The Soviet aim in the Middle East," even the *U.S. News and World Report* admits, "is to win Arab friendship in order to create a 'peace belt' along its southern borders as well as to neutralize the chain of U.S. air bases along the Mediterranean."

Israel is the only Middle East government which openly furthers U.S. penetration in that area. Its leaders, both inside and outside the U.N., have frequently pledged unqualified support to Western imperialist aims in the Middle East. The Soviets thus have spoken of "Zionist servitors of American imperialism" and have warned the Israeli leaders (as well as those of Turkey and Pakistan) of the possibly dangerous consequences of their policies. Fast turns this politically justified warning into "a variant upon the simple racism of Hitler," and declares that "Bulganin is using anti-Semitism as a foreign policy" and that "the Protocols of the Elders of Zion now serve Khrushchev's aim." He refers to Khrushchev as a "Jew-baiting, Jew-hating leader and hangman!"

Fast's wildest vituperations against the Soviet Union are always in connection with the crimes and injustices that were committed between 1947-50, in violation of the Soviet Constitution, against a number of Soviet Jewish writers. Others, though less intemperate, share this indignation. Jewish progressives throughout the world have expressed bitter criticism

at the failure of Soviet leaders to restore fully Yiddish culture since its virtual elimination during the 1947-50. purges. The apparent insensitivity and limited response of Soviet officials to demands for the restoration of Yiddish culture has undoubtedly lost a measure of good will for the cause of Socialism.

But moral indignation does not justify hysterical accusations. The frameups in the Stalin period involved practically all Soviet nationalities, and the Jews were by no means, percentage-wise, among the chief victims. The Georgians, for example, Stalin's countrymen, suffered much worse. By singling out uniquely the Jewish victims, Fast seeks to defame the Soviet government with the charge of anti-Semitism.

Events of the last five years show a whole series of legal and other measures aimed at rectifying injustices committed against some national groups. The chiefs of the Soviet state have met with Jewish leaders from various countries and discussed questions of the status and culture of the Jews in the Soviet Union. The Soviet government is issuing translations of numerous works of contemporary and classic Yiddish writers in editions of millions of copies. Theatrical and other cultural events in the Yiddish language are taking place in various cities of the country. Early in 1958, Samuel Halkin, a well-known Soviet Yiddish poet, was awarded the Order of the Red Banner for his literary contributions.

Evidence of the position Jews occupy within Soviet society today was disclosed in the May 1957 issue of the Soviet journal, *Problems of Philosophy*, in an analysis of the national composition of the scientific personnel in the U.S.S.R. in 1955. Of 222,893 scientists, 144,285 were Russian (out of a total population of 100,000,000). Second were the Jews, 24,620 of a total population of over two million. Though only one per cent of the total population, Jews comprise about eleven per cent of the national scientific cadre. Some 260,000 Jews, it was recently reported (over 10% of the total Jewish population), are active in leading positions in various State, party, industrial and agricultural organizations.

Thus, about one of every four Jews in the U.S.S.R. occupies a relatively high position in the scientific or governmental apparatus.

These facts refute the charge of Soviet anti-Semitism. However, people are still perplexed at the course pursued in relation to Yiddish culture. Some Soviet leaders have claimed that the vast majority of the Jewish population no longer use Yiddish as a cultural medium. But there is evidence of a demand for that culture in the U.S.S.R. The works of scores of contemporary Soviet-Yiddish writers are not published in their original tongue. The failure of the Soviet government to explain or to remedy this strange situation, feeds the kind of rage manifested by Fast and alienates many from the cause of Socialism.

Yet it is obvious that for Fast these still unsolved difficulties and dilemmas of socialism in the U.S.S.R. are only a pretext for a major reversal in his social and political career, a turnabout with entirely different roots and motivations.

PART VII

That socialism, the cause for which so many great and noble spirits of this century gave their lives, should be stained with crime is a tragedy. But in Fast's story this fateful tragedy becomes an anthology of self-pity. Robert Hatch in *The Nation* wrote: "It would be pleasant to welcome him home and not cast doubt on his lurid traveler's tale; however, Fast was trapped by his own ego."

Had Fast limited himself to his own state of mind and probed it honestly, his testimony might have been an interesting psychological document of his inner conflicts. But instead of candidly scrutinizing his own dilemmas and conflicts he issues sweeping judgments on a world movement and on a whole epoch of complex historical developments.

Beyond bits of information and a few rambling observations about life inside the Communist Party, there is little to recommend in *The Naked God*—such was the consensus of most anti-Communist reviewers. They felt disappointed. They had anticipated some trenchant anti-Communist ideas or arguments. The missile and anti-missile missile-obsessed Washington power elite, confronted with the inexorable advance of socialism and of the industrially backward peoples, is certainly in need of ideas.

Howard Fast let them down. He brought no new weapons to the anti-Communist arsenal. His main contribution is that "Communism is an idea that cannot be destroyed by force, in my opinion"—a thought recently also arrived at by even such thinkers as Harry Truman and Chiang Kai-shek. Another idea he stresses is "that Communism has lost step with history," an inanity that must have evoked bitter smiles among those now racking their brains how to halt the impact of Communist ideas on the awakening peoples of Asia

and Africa or how to catch up with the prodigious Soviet strides in science and culture.

Although evaluating *The Naked God* as "shabby," "incoherent" and "disingenuous," Irving Howe concluded his *New Republic* review with the following recommendation: "*The Naked God*, like many bad books before it may prove a useful book, for if politics requires men to refight battles that a disinterested intellect considers to have been settled long ago, then the need remains for hammering away at the deceit of Communism. If Fast's book is circulated in France and India it may do some good."

Before offering such counsel, Mr. Howe ought perhaps to consult the opinions of officials in charge of other surplus commodities. Export of tainted cheese and eggs, they have discovered, arouses deep resentment among the needy in the semi-colonial countries. So does the export of obscene sex and murder literature.

Like most anti-Communists, Mr. Howe underestimates the good taste and intelligence of economically less privileged peoples. Many tens of thousands of students, workers and intellectuals of these lands now are visiting the U.S.S.R. and China. Their impressions and observations cannot be countered by the rantings of ex-Communists in imperialist countries. If *The Naked God* is shabby and disingenuous to the "disinterested" American intellectual, it will be far more so to the interested and aware peoples of France and India for whom the impelling adventure of socialist humanity is of vital concern for their own peace and progress.

Socialist development, based on the social ownership of the means of production and scientific planning, has attained new dimensions. Soviet workers and scientists are already building and blueprinting with a daring and breadth of vision unequalled in history. They are confidently challenging the capitalist world as to who will excel in building a healthier, saner social existence.

The Soviets have already proclaimed the goals and terms of this historic contest. "We regard you as brothers. Tell us what you need and we will furnish it to you" was the declara-

tion the Soviets made to the Asian-African people at their recent conference in Cairo.

The contest between Capitalism and Communism can no longer be decisively influenced by the hatred of those whose gaze is fixed upon the past or by the seedy arguments and apocalyptic visions of envenomed ex-Communists.

To be sure, the polemic between Capitalism and Socialism will continue, with each pointing to the faults and shortcomings of the other. The old world will continue to point to what is still backward and undeveloped in the lands of Socialism. But it will become the victim of its own delusions if it will focus only on the still negative aspects of the past, and underestimate the capacity of Socialism to rid itself of the defects in its development.

Fast's call for destroying communist parties can only serve further to alienate Americans from the real world, from the numerous countries where these parties are an integral and indestructible social force. Equally harmful as well as inept is the stale Cold War formula Fast advocates for "breaking down the walls" which allegedly isolate the minds of people under Communism. The Soviet people now frankly expose the backward, rotten and immoral in their land. Committed to humanist goals, they are eager to learn, debate, and exchange experiences with workers, students, scholars and intellectuals of all capitalist countries.

It is the minds of the American people that are being encapsulated in a set of dangerous and blatant stereotypes. The acute cultural and political problems facing the U.S.A. are rapidly assuming crisis proportions. That there is a growing malaise in American society many social observers widely admit. The national welfare is not served by frenzied attacks upon Communism and the U.S.S.R. Even Bishop Fulton Sheen recently admitted, "One thing that Communism has done to Russia is that it has restored a sense of discipline and dedication that is very much in decline in America." (*New York Times*, November 14, 1957).

To dispel the many blights now corroding our national life, Americans will have to cultivate a rational attitude to-

wards the socialist world, toward its social system and its achievements. Indeed, Americans will have to shelve many outdated and false concepts if they are not to fall out of step with historical developments. Even the armament-obsessed American power elite, will have to change its mode of thinking on these question if it is to avoid bankrupting itself prematurely, hopelessly entangled in a maze of its own follies and contradictions.

The survival of the American and the Soviet people demands a joint effort to disperse the disaster-laden hydrogen-bombs hovering over them. Peaceful co-existence is the only choice for sane men under the new world circumstances.

The unbridled anti-Sovieteering of a Fast can only serve to create obstacles on the road to peaceful co-existence. Every such obstacle heightens the war danger. Since Fast makes so much of his conscience, let his conscience shoulder this responsibility if he can. We have come to the full circle. That Fast, like millions of others, should have been shocked by the revelations of unsuspected defects and injustices under socialism, was natural. But the response of reason and conscience demanded a mature probing of causes and means for remedy. What Fast produced was the self-serving solution to his own contradictions which brought him to the side of the commercialized enemies of conscience, morals and human freedom.

* * *

During other revolutions, poets also took sides and played out their dramas before history. When the Fasts of his own day ran before the rigors of social change, the great poet, Lord Byron, had his words for them. Writing of Robert Southey who made his peace with tory enemies of the French Revolution, to win appointment by the King as Poet Laureate, Byron provided the classic portrait of the writer prudently changing sides:

"He wrote treason, and serves the king—he was the butt of the Anti-Jacobin, and he is the prop of the Quarterly Review; licking the hands that smote him, eating the bread of his enemies, and internally writhing beneath his own con-

tempt—he would fain conceal, under anonymous bluster, and a vain endeavor to obtain the esteem of others, after having forever lost his own, his leprous sense of his own degradation. What is there in such a man to envy? . . . I assure him, that whenever he and his sect are remembered, I shall be proud to be forgot . . . the government found him useful in the periodical line, and made a point of recommending his works to purchasers, so that he is occasionally bought. (I mean his books as well as the author). . . . Who is there who esteems those parricides of their own principles? They are, in fact, well aware that the reward of their change has been anything but honor. . . . Mr. Southey may applaud himself to the world, but he has his own heartiest contempt; and the fury with which he foams against all who stand in the phalanx which he forsook is . . . the rancor of the renegade, the bad language of the prostitute who stands at the corner of the street, and showers her slang upon all, except those who may have bestowed upon her her 'little shilling.'"

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