

Fast Ends Membership In the CP

Attributing his decision primarily to the Khrushchev revelations, novelist Howard Fast has broken his long association with the Communist Party. In a Feb. 1 interview with the New York Times, the author of Freedom Road and other best selling works said that he was "neither anti-Soviet nor anti-Communist, but I cannot work and write in the Communist movement."

A supporter of the Communist Party since the Thirties, and a party member for the past 15 years, Fast apparently made his resignation known only through the Times interview. The Feb. 3 Daily Worker, in announcing his break reported that it had verified the Times story in a telephone conversation with Fast.

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Fast, who had been a regular contributor to the Daily Worker, discontinued his column last June at the time the Khrushchev speech was published in this country. He indicated to the Times that he has spent the period since that time reconsidering the question of his party membership.

The two principal factors causing him to break, he said, was the Khrushchev speech and the revelations of Soviet anti-Semitism which were given international publicity after the Warsaw Jewish-language paper, Folksstimme detailed the annihilation of leading Jewish cultural figures in the Soviet Union beginning with the liquidation of the leaders of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee.

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

Regarding the persecution of Soviet Jews, Fast said, "I knew little about anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union before the Khrushchev speech. That little troubled me, but I repressed my doubts. Then the article appeared in the Folksstimme last spring telling what actually happened. It was not an easy thing to live with."