

Howard Fast Assailed by Soviet As a 'Deserter' and Slanderer

U. S. Author, Who in 1953 Won a Stalin Peace Prize, Is Scored for Quitting Party and Criticizing Moscow

Special to The New York Times.

MOSCOW, Aug. 24 — The Soviet people were told today that Howard Fast, the American writer who once enjoyed great popularity here, had broken with the Communist party.

The news, which was announced in the United States last February, was coupled here with vehement denunciations of the writer. Mr. Fast, a winner of a 1953 Stalin Peace Prize, was called "a deserter under fire" and an author of "anti-Soviet slander."

The newspaper Literaturnaya Gazeta said in an article headed "desertion under fire" that Mr. Fast had borrowed "the false arguments and slanderous methods" of anti-Communist "fanatics" to announce his break with communism. The article scoffed at his "eulogizing" of American democracy.

Mr. Fast once wrote a regular column for the Communist Daily Worker in New York. He made known his renunciation of communism in an interview in the New York Times, and subsequently explained some of his ideas in the magazine Masses and Mainstream.

He said in the interview that he was neither anti-Soviet nor anti-Communist but that he could not work or write in the Communist movement. None of the ideas he expressed in the interview was printed here.

The author of "Thomas Paine" and many other novels of Americana was assailed by the Soviet paper for having repeated "the inventions of bourgeois nationalists and the most bellicose reactionary agents of zionism."

In striking at Mr. Fast, whose novel "Spartacus" is even now under consideration for publication, Literaturnaya Gazeta was tearing down one of the hitherto best known Americans in the Soviet Union.

"Howard Fast has left the Communist party of the United States," the article began.

"Publicly breaking all ties with the party, he preferred to make this known through the bourgeois New York Times in an interview with Harry Schwartz, well-known specialist in Soviet slander. Later, on the pages of Mainstream, Fast attempted to explain.

"As Fast himself writes, he took this step for two reasons — first because he was dissatisfied 'with the course of events in the Communist world,' and second, because he came to the conclusion the United States Communist party was allegedly 'not capable of making any further effective contribution to the struggle for democracy and social justice.'"

The paper does not dispute Mr. Fast's reasons as given in

The New York Times interview but criticizes the Masses and Mainstream article as follows:

"Nine tenths of the article Fast devotes not at all to explain the motives for this decision or to characterize the state of affairs in the United States Communist party, a member of which he was, but to anti-Soviet slander, a malicious attack on the Communist party of the Soviet Union and the Socialist system of our country.

"In a tone favored by anti-Communist fanatics from overseas propaganda centers, he borrows their false arguments and slanderous methods. Fast writes about the 'consequences of the cult of the individual in the Soviet Union' on the foreign policy of our Government, on Socialist democracy and morals.

"He also chose as a target of his attacks the nationalities policy of the Soviet Union. He speaks of 'discrimination' against national minorities in the U. S. S. R. and repeats the inventions of bourgeois nationalists and the most bellicose reactionary agents of zionism.

"Eulogizing the 'wonderful thing,' American democracy (for which Fast uses capital letters), he draws a dark and very far from real picture of the life of the Soviet people, who are allegedly deprived of anything approaching 'civil rights.' He comes out against the dictatorship of the proletariat, calling it 'tyranny' and against discipline and unity in the Communist party."

Thereafter, in about three times as much space as it devoted to the reputation and repudiation of Mr. Fast, the newspaper printed attacks on the author by American Communists including their leader, William Z. Foster.

Fast Reserves Comment

Mr. Fast said at his home here that he would reserve comment until he had read more detailed reports of the article about him.

In the interview printed in The New York Times of Feb. 1, Mr. Fast said the chief factor leading to his break with communism had been Nikita S. Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin at the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist party.

"It is incredible and unbelievable to me," Mr. Fast added, "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."