

NOVELIST REPLIES TO SOVIET CHARGE

Fast Says Red Diplomats Gave Data That Led to His Break With Party

By HARRY SCHWARTZ

Howard Fast revealed yesterday that Communist diplomats in the United States had given him information that helped induce him to break with the Communist party.

The information Eastern European representatives gave him about conditions in the Soviet Union was "even more monstrous" than the picture painted by Nikita S. Khrushchev, Soviet Communist party leader, in his exposé of Stalin in Moscow in February, 1956, Mr. Fast said.

The novelist, who won the Stalin Prize in 1953, disclosed some of the background of his break with the Communists in commenting yesterday on criticism of him printed Saturday in the Literaturnaya Gazeta, organ of the Soviet Writers Union.

The Literaturnaya Gazeta article presented the first public mention in the Soviet press that Mr. Fast had broken with communism. It denounced him as a "deserter under fire" and an author of "anti-Soviet slander." The disclosure of Mr. Fast's break with communism was printed more than six months after that fact had been printed here, though Mr. Fast has been among the best known and most widely read contemporary American authors in the Soviet Union.

The Soviet magazine charged that Mr. Fast had resorted to "slander." This was based upon his article last March in the left-wing magazine Masses and Mainstream, published here.

Mr. Fast wrote: "In Russia, we have socialism without democracy. We have socialism without trial by jury, habeas corpus or *** protection against the



The New York Times

EXPLAINS BREAK: Howard Fast, former Communist novelist. He said that information from Communist diplomats on conditions inside the Soviet Union helped cause his break with communism.

abuse of confession by torture. We have socialism without civil liberty. *** We have socialism without public avenues of protest. We have socialism without equality for minorities. We have socialism without any right of free artistic creation. In so many words, we have socialism without morality."

A statement issued yesterday by Mr. Fast said:

"The Literaturnaya Gazeta charges me with 'anti-Soviet slanders.' I heard these 'slanders' for years from many sources, and I did not believe them. When they issued from the mouth of Nikita Khrushchev in the incredible speech which he, not I, composed, I had to believe them.

"And when a round dozen of

Eastern European diplomats, shaken as they were at that moment, filled in me a background to the speech and to Mr. Khrushchev, even more monstrous than the document they supplemented, I had no other choice than to believe.

"I made no statement of fact about Russia which did not come from Communist sources. Instead of refuting these statements, they call me names. I asked many questions, no one of which was answered. I think it is time that Soviet spokesmen behaved like adults rather than petulant children."

Mr. Fast said that until his break with the Communist movement he was on most friendly terms with many Communist diplomats and other citizens of Communist countries who were in the United States. He indicated that they had made many disclosures to him that if publicly attributed to their authors, could cost them their lives.

He said that he was writing a long article that would make public part of what he was told by Communist sources about life and conditions in the Soviet Union. Mr. Fast said he expected to have the article published soon.

Observers noted that the belated Soviet announcement of Mr. Fast's defection took the hard and bitter line adopted earlier by William Z. Foster and other "Stalinist" Communists here. The Soviet attack was not marked by the relative moderation used originally by The Daily Worker with respect to Mr. Fast.

Earlier this year The Daily Worker made no secret of the fact that Mr. Fast's renunciation was a bitter blow to many Communists here. The "rightist" faction headed by John Gates, Daily Worker editor, had sought to treat Mr. Fast relatively mildly in that newspaper's comments and to avoid denunciation of him as a "renegade" and a "traitor," which in the past was the normal Communist reaction to any person's break with the party.