HOWARD FASTS

Picture of the American CP

By MAX MARTIN

Thousands of people have broken with and left the American Communist Party since the Twentieth Congress of the Russian CP. Other thousands, perhaps millions, parted ways with Stalinism in the decade preceding February, 1956.

The question arises: what are these people thinking and feeling now? What is their attitude towards Communism and towards Moscow? What are they doing?

No spokesman for the thousands of ex-Communists has come forward, no one who was regarded as representative of those who have broken with Stalinism. For one thing, nobody has yet tried to rally the ex-Communists into a movement or to gather them around a political program. And for another, they undoubtedly are not homogeneous in their thinking: a number of different views and outlooks can be found among them.

Howard Fast is probably the best known of those who have broken with Moscow and left the CP during the recent period. A relatively popular writer whose work is characterized by intellectual or writer of note in the Communist movement. His decision constituted a blow to the CP, in forms both of its individual and collective leadership.

Since the announcement of his break with the CP early this year Fast has expressed his views in many places, both on his thinking about his rupture with Stalinism. He has written a book on the party, he has had a debate on the party with the Writers and the Composer, he has appeared in the first issue of the new magazine, Prospects. It is doubtful whether he is regarded as a stumping up of his outlook to date. His views are of course not only because of his personal values, but because they may represent many others.

Fast informs us that for years he had held doubts about various aspects of Communism and that he had been regarded by the party bureaucracy as an irreconcilable and uncontrolable element. He details various struggles between himself and the CP cultural commissioners. And "emancipation" the latter had found in his works. The catalyst for his break with the CP, however, was presumably the denunciation of John Brown which he wrote, "Only with his contribution, the first and largest Communist Party on earth, did all the bits of the puzzle fall into place."

The impact of the report on the Ganges group, "Within the CP," is particularly on the Workers. The report of the Twentieth Congress had come as an explosive force of the CP - the Workers. It appeared the first trace of iconoclasm in the Communist Congress in our memory. It is a small step, but it was enough for us to realize that we too could break the hopeful images with the dust of a drowning man galpinig air. Everyone on the staff joined in, to one extent or another. Myself, I struck out in every direction with a joy I had not known for years."

"How did the leadership of the CP react? I have no doubt about it, because they had never coped with it before. Howard Fast attacked the CP and did not hold his peace."

GATES GROUP DOOMED

The Gates faction, said Fast, was destroyed as a whole. A substantial part of its adherents including himself, he said, has been expelled. Their situation was to liquidate the party, and they had probably succeeded: he was out. He states that he felt they had crowded into holes from the tempest that was emptying through the intellectual corridors of the communist world.

"Obviously, not only the overweignt of a whimpering attempt to remove John Gates from the party's paper and expel him from the party."

In the question and answer period Braverman noted that he had not desired any type of social protest in his new book, "East Germany, Eastern Europe, Russia or China. However, just as capitalism has its different forms (some democratic capitalism) so the pre-capitalists can attempt to change the structure of the social group, so they have attempted to change the structure of the social group and to take greater democracy for themselves."

Though Braverman's presentation seemed rather slight and weak in the 30's the common view in the association of capitalism with fascist economies, so Braverman is torn by the association of Russia with fascism. He never differs in his type of socialism, in any kind of government control, ownership or intervention.

In fact Braverman permitted himself to be identified with all those who are called socialists, which it is not always easy, for the individual free man utfitted by social restraints. But he does permit a socialist to talk about his program - the part aimed at cutting down the power of the state, the government restraints on business practice.

Braverman's reply was, even under the circumstances, restrained and well thought out. He pointed out that free enterprise is a micromon and has not existed in its purest form in the United States today is monopoly capitalism, because our economy and technology have made it impossible to get anywhere near the forms of capitalism.

He is wary of the problems of capitalist society — of depressions, wars, unemployment, taxation, etc. The trend toward monopoly capitalism, as described by Le, has not abolished capitalism, said Braverman, but it is a trend of the future and will eventually lead to socialism. Today it is only crying there, but Braverman placed himself in favor of a galloping trend as preferable in many ways. Greater government ownership of industry, he said, is only the logical situation to be liquidated the party, just as the state seems to be the future of politics. It is just that the government tout what is produced by all the people.

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Thus while Le appeared a fool and a stigmatic, Braverman and his intelligent son, the duel was not always a matter of personal differences. Braverman sided himself with the CP, but in recent years demands coordination, social harmony and planning; Le sided with the past traditions of the party, a "front line" of the party and a "laissez-faire" government. De- monocry? Freedom? Self-expression? Big- nity? Le argued about them, with utmost in their favor, not even given them his lip service.