

# CHANGE the WORLD

## michael gold

### About Howard Fast

IN THE discussion period at a recent Los Angeles meeting, a young man in a blue sport shirt, some husky machinist or carpenter, stood up and said, painfully: "It sure was a personal tragedy for me when Howard Fast turned on the movement. I sure had believed in him."



A passing remark I made here on the subject brought a few letters from readers, and perhaps I should have discussed it more fully, and here goes.

In his farewell Fast said it was the execution of a group of Jewish writers on Stalin's command that made him leave. But the truth of socialism doesn't depend on Stalin's deeds or misdeeds. Socialism is a growing fact of history, not the reflection of one man, or the mistakes of one country. The Paris Commune failed, but Lenin learned some valuable lessons from it.

Stalin's paranoia was a costly accident of history. But the Soviet people learned from it, and now are making some profound changes in their legal system, to guarantee the rights of the individual.

The crimes against the Jews are also being rectified. Anti-Semitism is not a built-in part of socialism, as it was with the Nazis. It is the very contradiction of socialism, which stands for brotherhood of all races and all peoples.

DURING the late world war against the Nazis, certain obscure intriguers tried to persuade Joe Louis, the great Negro champion, to remain neutral. They reminded him of the wrongs done in America to his people—the lynching, persecution, segregation.

"Hitler ain't going to fix that," Joe Louis smiled.

Howard Fast might also realize that the H-Bomb warriors are not going to be a cure for failures of democracy in the Soviet Union.

Fast contributed many fine novels to the democratic literature of America. For a few years he gave freely of his talent and devotion to the socialist cause. He won the coveted Stalin Prize, he worked alongside many people whom he respected and admired, standing beside Paul Robeson at Peekskill, and for the Rosenbergs.

SUDDENLY Harry Schwartz, the Russian "expert" of the N.Y. Times, appears with an exclusive interview in which Howard Fast announces his break with the movement. The statement could have been made in the Daily Worker or Morning Freiheit, in Mainstream magazine, of which he was an editor, in the Nation or the National Guardian.

But he chose the N.Y. Times and its specialist in anti-Soviet war. I find something repulsive about such a choice. The N.Y. Times is one of the world's great newspapers, whose sober technique and vast coverage one has to admire. But it belongs to a millionaire, and it has always been class-conscious. From the first, it was the bitter enemy of the Russian Revolution. It left nothing undone to destroy the first workers' state. Walter Lippmann once collaborated on a book exposing hundreds of anti-Soviet lies and elaborate inventions concocted by the Times, and presented by them as genuine news.

NOBODY can tell me this was part of the higher morality that Fast is always insisting upon. And it wasn't very nice, or very moral, to bait the fine Russian author, Boris Polevoy, formerly his friend, in the pages of the Times. Fast taunted Polevoy with not being free, but under the constant censorship of his government, while Fast himself was free in America, free as a wild, wild bird.

YES, FAST said that, when as everyone knows, for years no author was more suppressed than Howard Fast.

MONOPOLY capitalism runs the country. Its laws are not meant for freedom, but for profit. Its ways are not the ways of the democratic spirit. Offend this vast monster and your books aren't published or reviewed in the "free press." Fast used to know this and say this. Now he has suddenly begun to say the opposite. Why?

Today nothing can be done or even dreamed in a political vacuum. Defending the Jews against Stalin, as Fast claims he is doing, he finds himself a fellow-traveler of Harry Schwartz and the N.Y. Times. They are among those who have built General Speidel, the Hitler general now in command of our allied anti-Soviet armies in Europe. Is West Germany, with its neo-Nazi administrators, generals and businessmen, a refuge for the Jew and for democracy? And how will an H-Bomb war help the Jews of America and the Soviet Union?

To my mind everything seems trivial today when it is placed under the shadow of the fiery mushroom cloud that threatens to wipe out the human race.

I, for one, knowing the powerful talents of Howard Fast, hope and pray that these great talents will resist the pressures of war-mongering that now poison all respectable society in America.

The past is over, let us keep our eyes on the future. Let us try to make sure that the human race has a future.