

July 12, 1959



My secret life for

ON MAY 7, 1959, in a hot and crowded hearing room in Chicago's Federal Court House, I put the finger on the leading Communists in the Midwest—men who are working to destroy your liberty and mine. Thus ended my 15 years of living a lie—as a spy for the FBI in the United Packinghouse Workers Union and the Communist Party of America.

For 15 years, my family and I took abuse from people who were once our friends. I accepted this as part of the job I had enlisted for. But my family had to live with it in confusion and bitterness. They couldn't know what I was doing, and they suffered because of it. I'm more proud of them than I can express for their faith in me throughout those trying years. I hope, somehow, to make it up to them now.

My work as a spy started when I was elected joint chairman of District 1 of the United Packinghouse Workers of America. I had been employed at Armour and Company for almost 20 years, and was a junior craftsman in the boiler shop when I was elected to Union office.

As a Union member, I had been aware of Communist activity. I knew that Union meetings were rigged and that members who objected were threatened and shoved around—that is why I wanted to be elected, so I could do something about it. But I had no real idea of how much the Communists had taken over until I became a Union officer myself.

During my first year in office, the International sent in teachers from Chicago's Abraham Lincoln School (this name is typical of the way Communists operate, always hooking up with something unshakably right and good) to see that we were properly indoctrinated. All the Union officers and stewards were given the word—the Communist word. Then I was sent to represent my district at an interstate meeting where the Party line was laid down to us; we were to object individually and as a group to U. S. Government action in sending our armed forces island-hopping against Japan instead of opening a second front in Europe to relieve Russia.

By that time, I'd had it. I saw that these people were more interested in supporting Russia and international Communism than in their own country, so I called the FBI and told them I had some information for them. At the time my oldest boy, Joe, Jr., was with the Navy in Alaska. My wife, Antoinette, and my other seven children (six girls and one boy) were at home in the five-room apartment on Chicago's South Side where we've lived for 26 years.

I told the FBI everything I'd seen and heard. I said I'd be glad to testify to these things, and name names. That's when they asked if I would be willing to join the Communist Party, take part in their program, and report their activities to the U. S. Government. I agreed without much hesitation. My reasons were simple enough. I'd been too

young to fight in World War I and too old in World War II; here was a way I could help.

The FBI warned me that complete secrecy would be necessary if I was to be useful to them and escape the fate that befalls discovered spies. This was the most difficult part of all for me, and I finally did confide in my wife some years later—but never to my children or anyone else.

SOON AFTER I enlisted as a spy, I became a full-fledged, card-carrying member of the Communist Party. My FBI contacts had told me not to appear too eager—to let the Communists approach me. That took a few months. A man called George—who was one of the top men in both the International Meat Packers Union and the Communist Party of America—sought me out one evening after a Union meeting.

"You're the most intelligent worker in the District," he told me. "We need men like you in the Party. Would you like to join?"

I asked for a few days to think it over, then agreed to join. Along with 25 other men and women, I took an oath to "serve the Communist Party of America." I rose steadily in the ranks.

Some years back, I had been recording secretary of a Union local, and I knew this officer has access to all minutes, letters, and other confidential data. So I always sought this job in my Communist associations—and I usually got it. Thus I was able to tell the FBI in great detail what was

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, MAY 8, 1959.

CHICAGOAN POSED 15 YEARS AS A RED

Packinghouse Worker Cites
Past With F.B.I.—Tells of
Anguish Role Brought

CHICAGO, May 7 (UPI)—
With a few words, Joseph A.
Poskonka today ended fifteen
years of masquerade as a Com-
munist.

The words were spoken before
a House Un-American Activities
subcommittee. They were

8 Nor...

From

TR
(Re
clud
tonig
out t
slide.

Tw
saved
feared

It s
the
So

For 15 years this citizen and his family were despised and abused because he was an active Communist; today he reveals his true role as a spy for the U.S. Government

the FBI

By JOSEPH A. POSKONKA

going on inside the Party. Most of my contacts with them were by phone, usually from my apartment where I had a private line. Periodically I would submit written reports covering a number of phone conversations. I was paid a small fee for this, but it was not a primary consideration.

I was attending three types of meetings regularly: Union meetings; meetings of front organizations that were Communist-dominated; and actual Party meetings.

About this time, Antoinette got involved, and I had to tell her part of the truth. Because of my Party connections, a woman Party organizer invited my wife to a Communist meeting. Antoinette was understandably confused, and asked me what to do. I told her to go, bring home whatever literature they gave her, and turn down any future invitations on the grounds that her family required all her time—which it did.

"You're liable to hear many bad things about me," I told her. "Don't believe them. I can't tell you why right now; I can only ask you to believe in me and believe that what I'm doing is good and right."

Few of our friends or acquaintances knew of my activities, and things were fairly normal for all of us until 1944, when a Polish newspaper which was widely read in our neighborhood carried a picture of me on its front page with a story naming me as a Communist and identifying me as being involved in a plot to turn the Polish govern-

ment over to Russia. The whole thing was fantastic except for what they said about my being a member of the Communist Party. That was true.

I hadn't yet seen the story when I was returning from work the day it appeared. I stopped in a restaurant in our neighborhood for a cup of coffee and a few words with the proprietor—an old friend. There were two men and a woman sitting together inside, and I saw them whisper and point at me as I came in. Then, before I could even sit down, the woman came over to me, called me a filthy name, and hit me in the mouth.

That was my first indication of what was going to happen again and again in the years ahead. It took all my will power to keep from protesting, from striking back.

Later, when I saw the newspaper, I understood why the woman had hit me. My family was silent that night at dinner. They didn't look at me, and everyone finished and left the table quickly.

THAT NIGHT as I went to bed, I thought: "This is the way it's going to be if you stick it out. Make up your mind to that or get out right now."

I couldn't quit. The war was still on, and I saw this as my part in it. So I got deeper and deeper into Communism. The Party considered me so promising that I was sent to a Workers' School from which I actually graduated as valedictorian of my class!

For weeks, right in Chicago, they pumped us

full of hate for America and capitalism, and admiration for the Russian system! When it was all over, George came to see me again and said:

"Joe, if it ever comes to war with Russia, you have one of the most important jobs of any of our people. You can help tie up the whole meat-packing industry, and that's going to hurt real bad. You've got to be ready to do it fast when the right time comes."

This was my high period with the Commies. I was attending eight or ten meetings a week and reporting volumes of information to the FBI. But I made the mistake of getting over-eager. Even dedicated Communists aren't supposed to be as anxious to attend meetings as I was—particularly meetings that weren't involved in the specific work I was doing.

George called me in one day and asked me why I had passed up a Union District meeting to attend a front-organization affair at a Chicago high school the same night. I think he accepted my explanation, but I realized I would have to be much more cautious.

At any rate, George asked me to help organize a Communist-front organization which I'll call here the Committee for Preservation of National Rights. I was made treasurer—which was later to get me in trouble with the Party again.

At home, things were uncomfortable. The children said little to me, but I could see the reproach in their eyes. They were customarily greeted with,

(Continued on page 6)