

tution through exhaustion of savings and diminished opportunities for employment.

3: Accept a minor or "executive" position from the boss-Corporation, at whatever salary or wage he can get and with no guarantee whatever against cuts, exploitation or the loss of his job.

4: Unite, with all other members of his group on the basis of the broadest possible economic and political program directed against all aggressions of finance capital and eventually, with all workers, professional people, small farmers and the exploited in

every field, join in one massive People's Front to block the growth of reaction, to prevent fascism and imperialist war.

The petty-bourgeois groups are caught between the anvil of reaction and the hammer of revolution. Either way they turn they are confronted by one supreme challenge: the challenge to organize. Behind them is the powerful state apparatus of the ruling class, organized to the least detail for "the invisible event" of fascism. That is one world: the world of decay, terror and a bestial hatred of all human ideals. In front of them, or-

ganized on the basis of a disciplined and unrelenting class struggle against all exploitation of man by man, are the revolutionary forces of the workers. That is the other world: the world of Socialism. . . .

The middle classes *cannot* organize independently for a "third world." Eventually, they must throw their strength and allegiance on one or the other scale of the balance. For the big bourgeoisie and for the politically mature proletariat, the choice has been made. For those still between it is now and unequivocally, "Either—or?"

# Poland's City of Little Tailors

JOHN L. SPIVAK

PARIS.

**I** WAS the guest of a banker in Warsaw and he told me of the misery and hunger of the Polish people.

"It is simply incredible how they live," he said, helping himself to another glass of rare wine. "You should see the industrial workers as well as the peasants to understand how poverty stricken we are."

He drank the wine and shook his head sadly. The banker really felt sorry for the people but other than trying to keep the zloty (unit of exchange) stable and contribute good-sized sums to charity to relieve the distress, he had no idea of what to do about it.

"How do the industrial workers live?"

"Terribly. You should visit Brzeziny." He shuddered at the thought of that city.

"But I don't want to see unusually bad conditions. I want to see the average. Are the conditions there fairly representative?"

He thought about it carefully and finally nodded his head.

"Yes—for that type of worker. The city itself is peculiar because the entire population lives by sewing trousers and vests and coats. It's a city of little tailors. They make cheap clothes for export abroad, especially to England, which in turn sells them to her colonies. When you see Brzeziny you will have an idea of how the Polish industrial worker lives."

I went to Lodz where so many middle men who supply the cloth to the little tailors of Brzeziny have their factories. There I was the guest of a rich pants-manufacturer. Sitting at his table laden with fruits and cakes and tea, he sighed, "You must go to Brzeziny. There you will get an idea of how Polish industrial workers live."

The pants-manufacturer was a kindly man and his sigh was real. I had heard of his charity contributions, of how really heartsick he was at the extreme poverty all about him.

"They are very poor?" I asked.

"Terribly poor," he said, pouring more tea for me into an exquisite cup.

"Do the middle men who distribute the cloth among these tailors make any money?"

"Naturally." He smiled understandingly. "When I give work to many families I make a profit from each one—"

"Yet you feel terribly sorry for them?"

"I do," he said and I believed him. "But what shall I do?" he asked rather helplessly. "If, touched by their extreme poverty, I pay them more I will not be able to compete with other manufacturers. If I let softness get into my business, I will go bankrupt."

"You had a strike of your workers—" I began.

"That is true; and with the help of the police I broke it. What else could I do if I want to stay in business? I fought for my business just as these workers fought for their livelihood. I felt sorry for them; I wish I could have done something, but I couldn't without reducing my profits or going bankrupt. And if I start reducing my profits and follow it through logically I might as well divide up everything I have and join them and let someone else exploit me as I exploit them; and that would not help the workers much and it certainly wouldn't help me."

"But you are so touched by their poverty. What can be done about it?"

He shook his head slowly. "The only answer is to change the whole economic system and I am opposed to that because it is to my interest to keep this system," he said frankly.

"Then you are willing to keep these tailors in the poverty you describe so that you can live well?"

"I am not willing," he said with feeling, "but it is poverty for them or poverty for me, and if it comes to a choice I prefer poverty for them. But you really should go there and see for yourself."

Brzeziny is less than an hour's drive from Lodz and the ancient, rattling taxi threatened to fall apart as it bumped along the rutted frozen road. Occasionally a bony

nag pulling a long wooden wagon with a scarecrow sitting on the driver's seat passed us. You tried to see the scarecrow's face but it was too bundled up in protection from the bitter cold; and occasionally a man or a woman hurried by on the road, carrying something in his arms.

"What are they carrying?" I asked the driver.

"A little wood," he said. "They find little sticks in the fields sometimes and they can build a fire to keep themselves warm."

And then we came to Brzeziny.

**R**OWS upon rows of houses stretched along the twisting main street, houses of wood and houses of brick, some with wooden roofs and some with straw-thatched roofs, one-story houses and two-story houses and three-story houses with rooms portioned out to get the most rent out of the 17,000 human beings who live there.

I walked along its cobbled streets and narrow, broken sidewalks with an odd feeling that there was something familiar about the place, that I had seen it somewhere before and then suddenly it came upon me in a flash: it was a dead city. There was no one to be seen. It was just a city of cobbled streets, sagging buildings, broken walls, cracked sidewalks and silence.

I turned a corner and saw the figure of a woman issue from a doorway. Her hips bulged from the many petticoats she wore to keep warm and her head was covered with a great shawl. I hurried towards her, but she vanished into a courtyard. I stood at the courtyard entrance trying to figure out where she had gone when I became aware of a faint whirring noise and while I was puzzling over that another creature with a long beard darted out of a nearby doorway, lugging a huge bundle of clothes.

I rushed after him. "Where is everybody?" I asked. "There doesn't seem to be a soul in the city."

"There is work now and we must work,"

he said, hurrying on while I kept pace beside him. "There is not time to go outside for soon there will be eight or maybe ten weeks when there is no work. Then we can go outside, but now we must work."

He darted into a doorway and the door closed in my face. There was work now and soon there would be no work; they had no time to talk to a curious individual whom they had never seen before.

I looked at the one-story shack looming drab and gloomy in front of me. From here too came that whirring sound, a sort of drone that would rise to a sharp, high pitch and then die down to a faint whirring moan as though it had no more strength to go on. I listened for a moment and knocked on the door.

A woman, her head wrapped in an old shawl, opened it. I could not see for a moment when I entered because of the dim light, but as I stood there explaining why I was there the whirring grew louder and then I saw that the sound came from two Singer sewing machines near a window so covered with steam from the breath of those in the room that it was opaque. Two men in their shirt sleeves sat at the machines, working by the half light that came through the panes. I could not make out their faces for they were against the light, but when they talked the voices were those of young men. As my eyes became accustomed to the light in the room I made out another woman, a shawl wrapped round her, and four little children squatting on the plain board floor looking up at me curiously. The woman who had opened the door for me seemed to be crouching, as if about to pounce on me. It was a little while before I realized that she had sat over those whirring machines for so many years that her spine had been permanently affected and that she could not walk upright.

"What is this street called?" I asked.

"Kosciuska," came a man's voice from a dark corner of the room. It was not until he spoke that I noticed a bearded figure bent over a wooden table cutting cloth with a long pair of shears.

"How do you spell it?"

"Spell it? I do not know. He is the one to whom there is a monument in Lodz. I hear he went to America to help make them free. I have a daughter in America," he added, "but I never hear from her."

I took out a piece of paper to make some notes.

"And your name?"

"Why do you want his name?" the woman with the twisted spine suddenly asked in a frightened voice. "His lungs are better now. It is not necessary to take him away. See, he is working very hard, so why do you want his name?"

She snatched up a little child playing among the few sticks of wood near the stove as though she feared I would take the child too.

"I am not here to take him away," I ex-

plained gently. "I did not even know that his lungs were bad."

"Everybody's lungs are bad," said a young voice from the whirring machines.

"My name is Platter," said the old man, trembling.

"Don't give him your name!" the woman cautioned excitedly. "Maybe he will take you away. How can you tell?"

"How many children have you?"

"Ten," he said, continuing his cutting.

"There! What did I tell you!" the woman cried despairingly. "He will take the children away."

"No, no, no, I only want to know how you live—"

"How we live?" The old man raised his head, turned to his wife and then to the two men working at the machines. "He wants to know how we live! He has come from America to see how we live!"

He chuckled as though it was very funny, a chuckle that was abruptly broken by a fit of coughing.

"There!" the woman cried in agony. "See! Now he sees that you are not well and will take you away and then how will we live?"

"He wants to know how we live!" the old man repeated gasping for breath from the fit of coughing.

"You see how we live," said a voice from the whirring machines.

"How can all of you sleep in these two rooms?"

"On one another," said the voice from the machines. "On one another and on the floor covered up by the pants we are making when there are not enough rags to cover ourselves."

"How many hours a day do you work?"

"Eighteen," said the voice from the machine.

"And what do you earn for a full day's work?"

"When we have work, maybe a zloty, maybe a zloty and a half." (20 to 30 cents.)

The terrified woman who had been quiet for a few moments interrupted shrilly:

"Don't talk to him! Why did he come here? There are other houses where they work eighteen hours a day and make a zloty. And in what house are they not coughing up their lungs? Why did he choose us? What misfortune has come to us! Don't talk to him!"

"Be quiet," a voice from the machines said. "He is not come to bring misfortune. He is come to see how we live."

"He wants to see how we live? Well, he has seen—"

**T**HE door opened and a squat figure in baggy pants and a dirty, torn shirt, open at the neck, came in. He had a dirty rag wound around his neck for a scarf and it seemed to emphasize his sunken cheeks and the head almost swamped by a huge cap with a cracked brim. He was Moisha Bierbaum who lived in a street also named after

a Polish liberator—Pilsudski Street, No. 20, and as I talked with him I realized that I was not growing hard of hearing, but that he was toothless and had a disease of the throat that made his voice unusually faint.

"Go with him and see how they live," said the woman who was by now almost hysterical because I did not go, so I left her in peace and went with Moisha Bierbaum through the still deserted streets of the dead city. We climbed worn and broken stairs in a two-story building and entered a low-ceilinged room where two boys of not more than seventeen or eighteen sat at Singer sewing machines. There was a wood-burning stove just big enough to heat a small kettle of water in the center of the room, a long table at which Moisha himself worked and another table near the sewing machines where two pasty-faced children worked on boys' pants piled high before them. One of the children, a little bare-foot girl with red-rimmed watery eyes, had a rag around her throat. She raised her head to glance at me curiously for a moment and then bent it low again to her work.

"How old are you?" I asked.

"Seven," she said in a faint, husky voice.

"And you?" I asked the child standing on a wooden stool because he was not big enough to reach the table at which he worked.

"Nine," said the boy.

"But he is as little as a four- or five-year-old child?" I said to the father, while the mother stared, frightened and helpless.

"He cannot grow up," said Moisha Bierbaum toothlessly. "Something is the matter with him and he just doesn't grow up and we can't take him to a doctor."

"Haven't you ever found out what's the matter with him?"

"Ah!" he exclaimed, cutting rapidly, "I have worse woes than that. I have a boy who is fifteen and he is not bigger than this little one. He is crippled. He cannot walk and today, because he coughed so much, I let him go outside. Otherwise he is working with us."

"How many hours a day do you work?"

"Everybody in Brzeziny works eighteen hours a day—when there is work. If we don't work somebody else will get it."

"What time do you get up?"

"At four and by five we are at work and we eat while we work for we do not dare to stop."

"But it is dark—?"

"We use a candle. And that, too, costs money—to burn candles during these long winter months and we have to pay for the cotton for the sewing machines—"

"What do you earn when you work eighteen hours?"

"Eighty groshen. (16 cents). Sometimes we earn a zloty and sometimes even a zloty and a half. I have not paid rent for five years," he volunteered.

"What does the landlord say?"





"He has threatened to throw me out and now he tells me this is the last year he will let me live here. But how can I pay rent when we have nothing to eat and my children are crippled and one died from the lungs and the others don't grow up—"

The words issued from him in a rush, tumbling over one another as they came from his toothless gums.

"But if you are so poor, how did you get enough money to buy these two machines?"

"Ah," he said, "they are my dowry. I got two machines for marrying my wife so we can both work."

"How do you manage to live?"

"We eat bread and drink water."

**M**OISHA BIERBAUM cut cloth rapidly, the children bent low over their work, the Singer sewing machines whirled and the mother, her hands clasped nervously, stood rooted to the spot where she had been standing when I first entered, a tragic picture of dejection and misery.

"Well," I said finally, "what is to be done about these things?"

"There is nothing to be done," Moisha said slowly. "So we sit at the machines until we die. Many have died—just sitting at the machines. Two weeks ago, one died so—sitting at the machine and his wife lost three days' work because she had to pay to clean the pants he had spoiled with the blood from his lungs. He had tried to spit out mouthfuls of blood, but he was too weak, sitting there at the machine, and it fell on the pants and spoiled them."

"Aren't you organized here? Didn't anybody ever try to organize you?"

Everybody began to talk at once. The boys at the machines and the wife of Moisha Bierbaum. Yes, they had been organized,

but the organizers had sold them out.

"Then why don't you organize yourselves if you can't trust the professional organizers?"

"It cannot be done," said Moisha Bierbaum. "A union is no good when everybody is hungry. We have had strikes here. Everybody agreed to stop work, but here a man needed milk because of his lungs and where was he to get the milk if he didn't work? And there a child was sick and needed bread and where were they to get bread if they did not work? And so it is, woe is us and woe to our people! In the early morning somebody would smuggle in some work and then somebody else heard that they were working and they too got work. The people here cannot go on strike. They are too hungry."

"Haven't you any leaders at all?"

"Can the blind lead the blind?" he asked, waving his shears.

"You are Jews. You have a synagogue?"

"Of course," he said with surprise.

"And isn't the rabbi a leader?"

"Ah, the rabbi!" everybody began with a note of disgust. "He eats well. He doesn't care about us. When we give birth to a son and must have him circumcised the rabbi says 'Give me four zloty and if you do not give me four zloty then I will not circumcise him.' And how can we let our sons grow up without being circumcised? For this boy here"—he stopped work and ran over quickly to the little boy standing on a stool—"she sold her golden wedding ring to have him circumcised. Where can we get four zloty?"

"Then what have you got a synagogue for?"

"To pray in," Moisha Bierbaum remarked with a shrug.

"And what do you pray for?"

"For the end to come quickly by God's own will," he said slowly.

**W**HEN I returned to Warsaw a Polish diplomat invited me to tea in the Hotel Europejski's cheerful and richly-upholstered café where the capital's "best people" gather.

Here at little glass-topped tables sit the men who run Poland and the women who wear their jewels. Here they come almost every day to drink a coffee or liqueur, read the papers and discuss world affairs. Wherever you look are more beautiful women expensively perfumed; diamond bracelets and gold earrings flash as they turn their graceful heads or raise their lovely arms; and over all is the buzz of cultured voices and the soft sound of laughter. And sitting in this atmosphere my host talked with me long and earnestly. Poland was poor, so distressingly poor—

I remembered that Henryk Gruber, one of the biggest of Poland's bankers, had told me frankly that the ruling class of his country totalled between 50,000 and 100,000 people and the rest of the thirty-three and a half millions paid tribute. I told my friend, the diplomat, what Gruber had said and he nodded and then I told him of what incredible misery I had seen during my visit.

"Shocking," he said when I finished. "Yes; I know. It is as I told you. Poland is terribly poor."

"What is Poland—these people—doing?" I nodded towards those about us.

"Most of them know only vaguely that conditions are so bad. The government is trying to raise farm produce prices so as to increase the country's purchasing power."

He talked to me as diplomats talk—suavely, culturedly, saying nothing except that Poland was poor, very poor.

# Martial Law Grips Indiana

*"A Day Is a Year" in Indiana*

RUTH CRAWFORD

**F**OUR Indiana counties—Sullivan, Vigo, Floyd, Clark—are under martial law.

A resolution calling for a statewide general strike is being acted upon by the Indiana Central Labor unions throughout the ninety-two counties in the state; and a *regiment of the United States army, stationed at Fort Benjamin Harrison, near Indianapolis, is being motorized in order that it will be able to move swiftly into strike territory.*

Contrast this ugly picture with the comment of a striker's daughter in Terre Haute when the National Guard moved into that city during its "labor holiday" last July. She said, with incredulous naivete, "The National Guard is not supposed to take sides, but they sure do in this case. They have closed the Labor Temple, the strikers' own property. I don't see a law like that."

Today her words recall Lenin's observation: "During a revolution millions and tens of millions of people learn each week more than they do in a year of the usual somnolent life."

What have the Hoosiers learned?

Since that July day when the National Guard came into Terre Haute, gassed, clubbed and bayoneted the workers around the Columbia Enameling and Stamping Company's plant, closed the Labor Temple, broke up the commissary, threw the strike leaders in jail along with protesting liberals, banned all public meeting of workers, closed the churches, commandeered the radio station, *censored even the union order calling off the strike*, neither side has been in doubt about the truth of Lenin's statement: "The state is the instrument of the ruling class."

"I don't see a law like that," the Terre Haute workers may have cried out in bewilderment at the beginning of this struggle, but that cry has been lost in the mighty chorus of angry protest that has risen now along the Wabash. It is as if the Bill of Rights, memorized by every Indiana school child, had never been written. All meetings are conducted by the grace of the commander of the National Guard who boasts that Sullivan and Vigo counties are under a fascist dictatorship and that he is the dictator.

The Guard is ready to handle any emergency, even to supply scabs to enamel the pots and pans for the Columbia Enameling and Stamping Company, where the workers are still on strike.

This use of the militia is foolproof. It costs the employer nothing, not even bed and board for strikebreakers. The taxpayers foot the bill. Let the men strike, bring the guard in while the federal government sends in

conciliators. When the guard is in and the picket line broken, let the representatives of the government go conciliating elsewhere! The situation is well in hand. Then, if the men and women are still foolhardy enough to refuse to work in your mill, give their jobs to the guardsmen. Most of them are young and have never had a job. They can work in the daytime and drill at night.

Democratic Governor McNutt, the former national commander of the American Legion, understands these things. He can be counted on. What worked in Sullivan county for the last three years and what has worked in Vigo county since last July was good enough to be applied in Floyd and Clark counties when labor trouble broke out in the B. Fine shirt factories January 20, following the company's attempt to bring in scabs from across the Ohio River.

There is only one hitch in this fascist program—the resistance of the organized labor movement. A day has been as a year in its education. It stands valiantly under the historic task placed upon it as the defender of the rights of the American people in its state. It has dealt blow for blow, gaining strength, courage, vision with each victory.

**F**ROM the trade unions of Indiana come resolution after resolution ringing with the impassioned eloquence of the Declaration of Independence. Last fall, in defiance of a federal conciliator's attack upon organized labor in connection with the Terre Haute general strike, the following was issued:

The Central Labor Union of Terre Haute and Vigo county, further realizing its public responsibility, will also continue its fight for free speech, free assembly, and a free press, and will use every means at its command to combat the attempt to set up a fascist-military dictatorship in Vigo county that deprives workers of their liberty, keeps them jailed with no charge against them, denies them counsel, trial by jury and even suspends the writ of habeas corpus. Organized labor still stands for liberty and justice.

But more than words are needed. The first step was a boycott of merchants who might be inclined to join the Law and Order League set up immediately by the local vigilantes, whose illustrious board of directors included the town's Liberty Leaguers, ex-Ku Klux Klan attorneys, bankers and manufacturers. Twenty thousand citizens signed in favor of the boycott within three days after its initiation.

The second step was the broadening of union activities to the surrounding counties. The next was re-winning the right to public

assemblage. Conservative labor leaders stood beside Norman Thomas when he spoke from the courthouse steps defying authorities to arrest him at the first assemblage of workers following the martial law edict. Today, Norman Thomas, the Socialist, is the town's hero.

A bitter fight, with Powers Hapgood as its spearhead, reestablished the picket line around the factory. Even now, ten months after the strike was broken by the state militia, one hundred join the picket line nightly, kept alive by a commissary provided by the trade unions, sympathetic merchants and farmers.

Resolutions endorsing the Farmer Labor Party have been passed by many locals. They do not need to be reminded that it was a Republican governor, Ed Jackson, who clamped martial law down on Sullivan county three years ago; and that the Republican mayor of Terre Haute sent the call for troops to the Democrat, McNutt.

Both the Socialist and Communist parties gained influence. Before the strike, although Terre Haute was the home town of Gene Debs, there were only five Socialist Party members in the town and the Communist Party was represented by a small isolated group. Since then, the Communist Party has become firmly established and the Socialists can pack auditoriums for Norman Thomas.

A United Front has been effected. Many liberals have played a prominent part in winning support for the trade unions. At least they have made the vigilantes retreat before public opinion. Typical of the feeling in Indiana, was the action of the labor-union delegate at a citizens' meeting called to plan a peace celebration for Armistice Day. He declared that organized labor would take no part in a meeting attended by a representative of the Law and Order League. The League's attorney left the meeting; the labor delegates stayed.

**T**HUS, they choose sides. The class line has sharpened. The issue is fascism; and those who are against it have rallied 'round the trade unions. Fascism, if it comes, will do so only if it overcomes severe resistance.

The death struggles of the little "rugged individualists," fighting desperately against the competition of the great corporations, are accompanied by fascist attacks. During the last two decades, the latter have been moving into this last stronghold of home-owned industries.

These great corporations paid higher wages than people were accustomed to in