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cc - Mr. Ladd
Mr. Coyne
Mr. Powers

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September 13, 1947

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
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DECLASSIFIED BY 5668-stp/...
6-26-95
ON

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON
Alias: Jacob Levy

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I. PERSONAL HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

The following information with regard to Lawson's background was obtained from a book entitled, "Twentieth Century Authors" by Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, published and copyrighted November, 1942, by the H. W. Wilson Company, it being observed that there is contained therein an autobiography of Lawson reflecting he is of Jewish descent and that his original family name was Levy. Lawson was born September 25, 1895, in New York City. He attended Outler School in New York, and Williams College, graduating in 1914. His first job was that of cable editor in the New York Office of Reuters, Ltd., in which agency his father was an executive, where he was employed for more than a year at which time he resigned after receiving a small payment on the option for a play for George M. Cohan and Sam H. Harris. In 1917 Lawson went abroad, serving in the Volunteer Ambulance Service with the French Army, later being transferred to the Italian front. He returned to Europe for two years, after the war, living chiefly in Paris, then came back to the United States with his new play, "Roger Bloomer," which was produced by the Actors' Theater in 1923.

"Processional," Lawson's second theater drama, was presented by the Theater Guild in 1925, and, according to the book, was the center of spirited controversy. "Nirvina" followed "Processional" in 1927, in which year the "new playwright's theater began a short and hectic career." Lawson was a director of the theater and its initial production was the political farce, "Loud Speaker." Following this, "The International," written by Lawson, was presented by this theater.

Motion pictures which Lawson has written, according to "Twentieth Century Authors," are "Blockade," "Algiers," and "They Shall Have Music," the latter in conjunction with Irngard Von Cube. Lawson also claims, according to this book, that he was planning a social history of American literature with special reference to the various popular slang forms of expression--newspaper, magazines, dramatic and vaudeville entertainments.

In this book, Lawson stated that his father was Simson L. Lawson and his mother, Belle Hart Lawson. He has been married twice, Kathryn Drain

- Mr. Tolson
- Mr. E. A. Tamm
- Mr. Clegg
- Mr. Glavin
- Mr. Ladd
- Mr. Nichols
- Mr. Rosen
- Mr. Tracy
- Mr. Egan
- Mr. Gurnea
- Mr. Harbo
- Mr. Mohr
- Mr. Pennington
- Mr. Quinn Tamm
- Tele. Room
- Mr. Nease
- Miss Gandy

J. E. POWERS:wma

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in 1919, this marriage terminating in divorce in 1925 and resulting in one son. Lawson is presently married to Susan Edmund Lawson from which marriage a son and a daughter have resulted. Lawson, according to the book, claims he is a member of the Council of the Authors League of America, a former President of the Screen Writers Guild and a member of the League of American Writers.

Further, clippings included in the alumni files of the Williams College revealed the following items:

October 15, 1936, Lawson was on the Advisory Board of the Dramatist Play Service, Inc., 938 East 38th Street, New York City, established by the Dramatist Guild of the Authority League of America; March, 1936, Lawson testified before the House Patents Committee Hearing for the Dramatist Guild of America in opposition to the Duffey Bill designed to modernize the 1909 copyright laws. In May, 1937, he produced a play entitled "March Song" dealing with a sit-down strike in an auto factory. The home address of Lawson was given as 2270 Laurel Canyon Boulevard, Hollywood, California; business address 7210 Santa Monica Boulevard, Los Angeles; permanent address Moriches, Long Island; occupation, playwright. (100-24499-229)

Who's Who, 1946-1947 reflects that Lawson also wrote Success Story, 1932; The Pure in Heart, 1934; Gentlewoman, 1934; Marching Song, 1937; Theory and Technique of Playwriting, 1936. It was also said that recent motion pictures of Lawson were Action in the North Atlantic, 1943; Sahara, 1943, and Counterattack, 1945.

It is to be noted that Lawson is presently a free lance writer and his most recent motion picture is "Smash Up."

II. ALLEGATIONS REGARDING LAWSON'S COMMUNIST PARTY MEMBERSHIP

Testifying before the Joint Fact-Finding Committee, California Legislature, in the fall of 1944, Lawson, under oath, denied that he was a member of the Communist Party. However, a reliable informant identified Lawson as a member of the Communist Party in 1941 and has stated that Lawson is a "Communist Party member, a playwright, and a leader of the Communist Party fraction among the artists of all varieties in Hollywood." (Discontinued paid confidential informant of LA office, William Hynes LA3)

In a sworn statement which Rena Vale gave to the Joint Fact-Finding Committee, California Legislature, John Howard Lawson was identified as a member of the Communist Party. She stated that he was active in

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Communist circles in Hollywood when she was in the Communist Party and that in Communist meetings, Lawson had stated that Communist propoganda must be integrated into all screen plays.

III. OTHER EVIDENCE OF LAWSON'S COMMUNIST AFFILIATIONS

Meetings of the Plenary Sessions of the National Committee of the Communist Party were held on June 28 and 29, 1941. William Z. Foster, James W. Ford, Alexander Bittelman and "numerous other high ranking Communist leaders" were alleged to be in attendance and John Howard Lawson was alleged to have attended those meetings as a delegate from California. (Memo furnished to Chicago Office by Col. Walter L. Fubershaw, rep of the Carnegia Ill, Steel Co. 100-24499-3)

In 1941, the Communist Party was in the process of realigning its Districts throughout the country as well as reorganizing its structural setup. District No. 13 was to include all of the States of California and Nevada, and was to have centralized offices at 121 Haight Street, San Francisco, as well as in Los Angeles. The San Francisco Office of District No. 13 was to be headed by Steve Nelson and Betty Gannett was to be the Organizational Secretary.

John Howard Lawson and Herbert Biberman were to control the organizational work in the Hollywood Area. (Confidential informant Harry J. Pfalsgraff of Chicago Office. 100-16227-20 p. 5).

In 1941, data and information from Mexico City to New York and return was allegedly handled by a courier system with a person named Kathryn Burke being Chief Director of Courier Operations. She reportedly acted as a contact for Gale Sondergaard, wife of Herbert Biberman, Director and Producer, and close associate of John Howard Lawson, who handled the material at Los Angeles. All material from Los Angeles and the Pacific Coast being sent to New York City was carried by John Howard Lawson who reportedly made frequent trips to New York. Allegedly when Larson arrived in New York, New York, he immediately went to the office of the League of American

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guidance of the Committee, to exploit names of important individuals in the furtherance of the Communist Party line. It has been stated that the program of the Hollywood Democratic Committee was not only parallel with that of the Communist Party line, but that the organization was dominated and inspired by persons of a Communist character, including John Howard Lawson. (Confidential Informant Harvey Gilbert Wolf of the Los Angeles Office.) (100-197270-2)

According to articles appearing in the Los Angeles newspapers, the Hollywood Arts, Sciences and Professions Council of the Progressive Citizens of America, formerly known as the Hollywood Democratic Committee, held a five day conference at the Beverly Hills Hotel, commencing Wednesday evening, July 9, 1947. They announced that the purpose of the conference was to examine current restrictions on media of expression in the United States, and that the theme of the conference was "Thought Control in the United States." Mr. Howard Koch, writer and former chairman of the Hollywood Writers Mobilization and author of the screen version of "Mission to Moscow," reportedly introduced John Howard Lawson as one of the main speakers on the program. Koch identified Lawson as one of the country's foremost scholars and one who had just completed a four volume "History of the United States." (100-24499-401)

B. HOLLYWOOD WRITERS MOBILIZATION

The Hollywood Writers Mobilization was formed very soon after the attack on Pearl Harbor, on December 7, 1941, and was established by persons who were most active in the League of American Writers. According to information contained in reports of the Joint Fact-Finding Committee, California Legislature, based on information developed in connection with interviews conducted of Hollywood writers in October, 1944, the Hollywood Writers Mobilization was under the control of the Communists and had numerous contacts to supply the pictures which were being released in the liberated countries. (100-102217-14)

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