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JOHN HOWARD LAWSON
Alias: Jacob Levy

September 13, 1947

7/1/79 (Subj) Hcy
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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 Irmgard 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 propaganda 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 Carnegie 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 [redacted] of Chicago Office. 100-16227-20 p. 5).

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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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On the back of a pamphlet published in 1940 by the Jewish People's Committee, 100 Fifth Avenue, New York City, entitled, "For United Action in the Struggle Against anti-Semitism and Fascism," appears a list of the sponsors of this organization. The name of John Howard Lawson is included. (

It has been charged that the Jewish People's Committee, which developed into the current organization known as the American Jewish Labor Council, was a Communist inspired group. ([redacted] conf. informant of NY Office) (100-11380-16 p 4, - 6, 61-7590-404) OTHER 4

In the Peoples Daily World for June 17, 1941, an article appears attacking the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the form of statements of various members of the Citizens Committee for Harry Bridges released by the Committee headquarters at 1265 Broadway, New York City. Included among individuals commenting on the conduct of the Bridges hearing and the activities of the FBI was John Howard Lawson, "Playwright and screen writer." (39-915-1382)

It has been alleged that John Howard Lawson was a sponsor of the Schappes Defense Committee which was founded in New York City in July, 1941, to raise funds for and help prosecute the defense of Morris U. Schappes former City College instructor who was sentenced to a prison term in the State Penitentiary for perjury arising out of a 1941 inquiry into Communism in educational institutions. The express purpose of the Committee as set forth in one of its pamphlets was "to help prosecute the legal defense, to acquaint the labor movement, the educational world and the general public with the issues involved in this case, to raise funds for the defense and to help Schappes support those dependent upon him." (Trash coverage on office of Labor Research Association, 80 E 11th St. NYC) 100-29-34 p 40

The name of John Howard Lawson appeared as a sponsor on a circular distributed by the American Youth for Democracy, 1567 Broadway, Detroit, Michigan, dated December 20, 1945. (61-777-15-279)

According to a pamphlet issued by the Los Angeles Workers School, John Howard Lawson, together with Albert Maltz and other invited lecturers, were to be the instructors at the course entitled, "The American Democratic Tradition," an eight week course, tuition \$3. The course was to be given at the Unitarian Church, 2936 West 8th Street, Los Angeles. Of all the courses taught at the Workers School, according to this pamphlet, this was

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the only one not being taught at the Workers School proper located at 212 West 3rd Street, Los Angeles. This course, according to the booklet, "will be a lecture course dealing with the decisive periods in the history of our nation; the democratic conditions throughout the development of our people. Beginning with the colonial period, the course will trace the growth, problems and developments of the American tradition during the period of the Civil War and reconstruction; it will deal also with the agrarian populist movement, the First World War and the present war for national survival." It is to be noted that this is not the same course that was given by Lawson at the school for the League of American Writers, entitled, "Our Democratic Heritage." The Los Angeles Workers School, founded in 1939, according to the pamphlet, bases its studies on the various teachings "in social science...Marxism...the theory and practice of the working class and the people's movement throughout history." The entire board of the Workers School are Communists, according to a confidential informant, who also indicated that this school is the educational plant for the Communists in Los Angeles County. (Confidential informant Harvey Gilbert Wolf (100-24499-234 p 6) LA Office)

In April, 1946, the Motion Picture Alliance, 159 South Beverly Drive, Beverly Hills, California, an anti-Communist group, published a pamphlet indicating that it desired to acquaint the membership with what "Comrade Lawson" represents. The pamphlet set forth:

"The following partial list of Comrade Lawson's affiliations and activities is condensed from the official report of the Committee on Un-American Activities of the U. S. House of Representatives. Every organization and publication mentioned in this list was established to the satisfaction of the Committee as either a Communist front, or Communist controlled:

"Member of the American Committee to Save Refugees (Former Gov. Herbert L. Lehman of New York withdrew as a speaker at a banquet from this group, giving as his reason that organizations sponsoring it were Communist fronts).

"Signed Open Letter to President Roosevelt demanding that we declare war on Finland.

"Member of American Committee for Anti-Nazi Seamen.

"Sponsor of American Peace Mobilization which picketed the White House during the Hitler-Stalin pact advocating No Aid to Britain.

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National Committee. These meetings, attended by V. J. Jerome, head of the Party's 'cultural commission,' heard the Lawson report on the growth of Communism in Hollywood, including:

- "1. Lawson's success in recruiting stars, writers and other Hollywood figures to the ranks of the Communist Party.
- "2. The extent of fund-raising among stars who gave money to the innumerable Red Fronts.
- "3. The ability of the Hollywood comrades to inject the 'party line' into various movies in studios where the Reds had influence."
(100-24499-A)

On June 1, 1947, an article appeared in "The Worker" entitled, "Brig. Gen. Evans F. Carlson, Hero in War and Peace," written by John Howard Lawson. The article eulogized the greatness of Carlson and concluded with the statement, "Like the men who died at Makin and Guadalcanal, he gave his life to make his country and the world free. While we mourn his loss, we pledge ourselves to continue the fight."
(100-242115)

VII. CRIMINAL RECORD

There is an unverified report that at a lecture in June, 1942, before a school of the League of American Writers, Lawson stated that on the day that Sacco and Vanzetti were executed in Massachusetts, August 27, 1927, he, Lawson had been arrested in Boston for picketing the State Capitol. It is further alleged, Lawson was arrested on May 17, 1934, on a charge of criminal libel growing out of an article which was written by Lawson in the Daily Worker, described as a Communist east coast organ, defending a Communist organizer, Harold Rolston.
(100-24499-156 pp. 69 & 70) Harvey Gilbert Wolf, C.I. Los Angeles.

It is observed that the New York Times morgue refers to two articles regarding the arrest of Lawson. The first article dated July 6, 1934, reflects that Lawson was arrested at Birmingham, Alabama, on that date and released under bond of \$300 to appear in the Recorder's Court the following day. The arrest reportedly followed a conference between Lawson and five other New Yorkers and W. O. Downs, Commissioner of Public Safety at City Hall at Birmingham. The article further revealed that on

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