

Guards Ousted Liberal Writer From COI Job

Interrupted Her in Midst of Writing Boast That U. S. A. Had No Gestapo

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Fourth of a series on the "Red" witch hunt now being conducted by Federal agents among liberals in public service and in certain war industries.

Josephine Herbst, the well-known novelist who abandoned the comforts of her Bucks County home shortly after Pearl Harbor to join the staff of the Co-ordinator of Information (COI), was fired three weeks ago, for no other reason, apparently, than her activities in support of the Loyalists during the Spanish Civil War.

On the day of her dismissal, the *New Republic* reports, she was sitting in her office, tapping out copy for transmission by short wave to Germany describing the liberties enjoyed by Americans. She was telling about our laws against unwarranted search and seizure, our laws protecting civil liberties. She was assuring the Germans that we had no secret police like the Gestapo in the U. S. A.

A COI security officer interrupted her labors, informed her that she and Julia Older, another writer, had been fired, and would they please leave immediately?

Guards Examine Papers

Armed guards examined Miss Herbst's and Miss Older's papers and personal effects; they confiscated their badges and poked into their handbags. Finally they escorted the writers from the building, marching them past their gaping fellow workers.

Neither Miss Herbst nor Miss Older was informed of the charges against them.

The guards said they didn't know.

According to Miss Herbst, subsequent questioning disclosed that she had not been investigated by either the Civil Service Commission or the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"On Mar. 24, in New York City," she declared today, "Mr. Robert Sherwood (head of the local office) corroborated what had been told me in Washington . . . that I had been dismissed as the result of findings of an investigating committee within the COI. I asked for the charges and Mr. Sherwood told me to send him a written appeal for a hearing. I sent such an appeal . . . A week later I was notified that it had been turned over to Col. Donovan (head of the COI.)"

Merry-Go-Round

"On June 4 I went to Washington and called on Col. Donovan's office to learn what had happened to my appeal. I failed to see the Colonel, although I called there and telephoned several times during the course of the day. A secretary finally told me that Col. Donovan had finally left a message to the effect that I was to take up the matter with the Civil Service Board of Appeals 'as was customary in such cases.'

"The next day, after intervention on the part of certain influential friends, I talked with Civil Service Commissioner Fleming, asking for specific information about the charges against me and the date of a possible hearing. I told him that it was impossible to postpone the hearing as I no longer had a job in Washington and that it would take unlimited private means to linger indefinitely. He promised to let me know within three days.

"On June 8 I called Commissioner Flem-



Josephine Herbst, novelist, who lost her job with the COI apparently because she was pro-Spanish Loyalist.

ing's office and could only reach his secretary, who asked me to call again the next morning. I did so and was told once more there was nothing to report, but that she would call me back the same day. She did not do so.

"I still do not know the charges against me, although it is now three weeks since I was dismissed 'as of the moment.'"

Although Miss Herbst never has been informed of the charges, she has received indications. Only last week, for example, she was called before the Civil Service Commission and questioned about her activities in behalf of the Loyalists. The Commission emphasized that it had not called her in connection with her dismissal, but merely to establish her eligibility for Civil Service.

She was confronted with clippings from the *Daily Worker* of articles she had written about Spain. Miss Herbst explained that she had written the articles for other publications and the *Daily Worker* had reprinted them without permission.

Miss Herbst is definitely and outspokenly unsympathetic to Communist doctrine and friends can explain her dismissal only by citing the report that Donovan had favored the Spanish Fascists, though for practical rather than ideological reasons.