Since I received this new version of "Cornered," I have sent along to you reports on six other properties concerning which you indicated prior interest. Thus I've had this around for quite a while---since March 29th. I understand that it is now pretty close to production, and I assume, accordingly, that it has been decided to put it before the cameras in pretty much the form it has now. I write this report with that in mind.

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I have quite a few worries about the script. The following are, I believe, the major ones:

(1) On Page 18 it is definitely established that the principal locale of the story is South America. I don't recall that the name of any certain country is used, but it is obvious that Argentina is the specific locale. If we tried to argue that it was neither this nor that particular South American country, it would only be a quibble.

The script shows, on Page 45, that the police of the country of our story are extremely noisy in matters of censorship. It shows (Page 47) that the police tap the telephone wires of "many people." It shows---beginning on Page 66---that a large underground group is active in the bringing of Nazi criminals to justice for the very obvious reason that the regular police of this country cannot be depended on to do it. It shows---Page 91 and elsewhere---that a Nazi network is established in this country. It shows---Page 92---that when the public of this country wants the truth, it must depend on the underground press. It seems indicated, by various pieces of evidence in the script, and particularly by the stuff on Page 114, that this underground is a South American underground, not a transplanted French, Dutch, or Polish underground. And it is quite clear that this underground---which is composed of entirely sympathetic characters, and with which our hero is in cahoots---gets opposition rather than cooperation from the regularly constituted authorities. And finally, on Pages 149 and 151, we see the police authorities of this country of our story conniving unmistakably at the covering up of crime and criminals.

Now of course all this is all right with me personally. I believe Argentina really has been guilty of such things as these. Winchell has said as much and more. Recently in Collier's there was quite a candid expose of such goings-on in Argentina.

But does the company wish to do battle with Argentina---just now, when Argentina has made a technical declaration of war against Germany, and has become, or is trying to become, a technical member of the United Nations? What will the OWI think of this? And the State Department---at a time when the State Department is trying to foster world unity? And if we try to argue that we do not name any specific South American country,
then will not such nations as Brazil and Paraguay—which have really been friendly to us—argue right back that, by failing to be specific, we are smearing all South American nations indiscriminately?

I don't know about these matters. I'm not up on our State Department's latest attitude toward Argentine. Maybe all these questions I have asked have already been satisfactorily answered. Maybe it is the company's intention to go boldly ahead anyway. If so, it is just dandy with me. But if it is still a problem, then here is a half-baked idea of how the problem might be solved:

Show by some mention of it early in the script that the Nazi fugitives are trying to establish themselves, not only in South America, but even in England and the United States—which they probably are. This would get us out of the position, as American film makers, of pointing the finger of accusation especially at South America.

Continue to avoid naming a specific South American country, and, if possible, actually show Gerard crossing South American borders—from one unnamed country to another unnamed country—as he pursues Vaudre.

Show that the underground group is not peculiarly a South American underground, but rather a transplanted European underground—composed of Frenchmen, Dutchmen, Poles—composed of people like Gerard, with special, personal grievances against the fugitive Nazis—banded together, wherever they may meet, in the common cause of revenge upon the Nazi criminals, wherever they make seek refuge.

Show that the underground workers operate secretly, not because they are opposed by the regularly constituted authorities, or because they can't depend on these authorities for justice, but simply so that they will not tip their mitts to the well organized and fearful Nazis.

Show that the underground workers, once they have got the goods on a Nazi fugitive, are quite ready to cooperate with the local police—in much the same way that many movie detective heroes are represented as doing.

Eliminate such business as that of the censoring of the magazine and the tapping of the telephone lines.

In the foregoing hasty suggestions, I am trying to work within the main outline of the script as now written. In the previous version of "Cornered," the man hunt was more of a personal, man-to-man business, with one lone inconspicuous guy on the prowl for another lone guy who
was trying to be inconspicuous, and the international political considerations did not enter into it. Actually, I myself am partial toward the personal, man-to-man treatment of the earlier version.

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(2)

I am a bit dubious about the romance. In the first place, I don't much like the idea of Gerard pitching woo so readily with another dame when he is supposed to be out avenging his beloved Celeste. In the second place, Madeline is not satisfactorily regenerated for me. For two years this girl has been sleeping luxuriously with one of the foulest of Nazi murderers. And she knew about him because her own mother told her. A girl fit to be our heroine should have left him unless there was some peculiarly powerful reason why she could not, and no such reason is ever established. Her alliance with Gerard leaves me uneasy especially in view of the fact that the guy with whom she has been sleeping for two years was specifically the foul murderer of Gerard's own beloved wife.

I think that if I were doing it, I might retain Madeline as Vaudrey's wife, but I would make her a heavy, definitely. I'd play love scenes between Madeline and Gerard. But I'd establish that Gerard is making passes at her at first only to get information out of her. Then I'd show him maybe falling for her a bit, and becoming convinced that she is on the level. And at the end I'd show, to the surprise of both Gerard and the audience, that she is a complete heavy, and that she has been playing him for a sucker all along. Meantime I'd have established a girl in the underground group—a nice square-shooting Marjorie Reynolds type—to whom Gerard has been giving the brush, and to whom he could turn at the conclusion.

Thus we'd have the sex in the scenes between Madeline and Gerard—and the clean satisfying romance with someone else. In "Murder My Sweet," somewhat similarly, Dick Powell has the sexy affair with Claire Trevor, but Anne Shirley is his true love.

(My secretary interrupts to say that the romantic strategy I have suggested is much like that used in "Hotel Berlin," which I myself haven't seen. But in "Hotel Berlin," she tells me, there is no Marjorie Reynolds waiting around for the hero after he got rid of the villainess.)

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(3)

For my personal dramatic taste, there is a bit too much action early in the script—as, for example, on Pages 9 and 10. This gives us an action opening, of course, but I'm afraid we never again equal this action. I'm afraid we top ourselves, as far as action is concerned, too early in the story. Personally, I'd prefer to open more quietly—without so much of the F.F.I. stuff—and save the fireworks and the most powerful action for
the scenes in which Vaudrec finally gets his.

(4) Note the action on Page 135: Von Strahl is disarmed and helpless. The civil authorities are outside the door. And Gerard takes a gun and deliberately shoots Von Strahl—twice.

Mr. Gordon will know more about this than I do, but I'm afraid the Hays Office will say our hero is just a plain murderer. I think the Hays Office will demand that Gerard either turn Von Strahl over to the civil authorities, or kill him somehow in self defense. A self-defense scene could easily be written, of course.

(5) In a couple of places, I think the script seems strongly imitative of previous pictures. The use of the fat man, Joshua Ounce, seems to me to be patently imitative of the Greenstreet character in "Casablanca," and I'm afraid it will seem so to the fans, also. I'd alter that characterization—even if only by making Joshua Ounce a little skinny guy. And the emphasis on Gerard's delirium reminds me a bit too forcibly of the detective's delirium in "Murder, My Sweet." The similarity will be pointed up if we use the same leading man as we did in "Murder, My Sweet," and I think the average fan will be as keenly aware of it as I am. However, it is probably largely a matter of directorial treatment.

(6) I think that the audience is tipped off too early to the fact that Perchon is really Vaudrec. It seems to me that the audience will know the score on this point as early as Page 42, when Perchon reacts to the stuff about Gerard being with the RCAF. I think we ought to keep the audience in the dark about this clear to the very end. We could do it by making Perchon a bit less conspicuous—and perhaps by having him actually speak in condemnation of the Nazis in private conversation with Gerard. It seems to me that if we tip off the audience about Perchon before the climax, we are losing some very valuable suspense. There is, of course, an exactly opposite way of generating suspense, and that is by telling the audience the lowdown about Perchon at the outset and by keeping Gerard in the dark. In this particular story outline, however, I believe it would be better to keep both Gerard and the audience mystified.

(7) It seems to me that on Pages 137 and 138 we are in danger of confusing some of the fans. On Page 137, Lugone says flatly: "Mr. Ounce was murdered by a Belgian named Perchon," and goes on to say flatly that "we know Vaudrec
was assassinated fully a year ago." Now of course, as we analyze the script, we know that Lugone is just covering up—just citing a phoney record for the sake of convenience. But will this be clear to all the fans—even if we try, directorially, to put plenty of significance into Lugone's line when he says "You follow me, Captain"? Some of the fans, unfortunately, are practically impervious to nuance of expression, and they may take what Lugone says as the literal truth, and be consequently confused. I know I must seem awfully finicky on this point, but I'd throw in something—perhaps an aside between Gerard and Lugone—to keep even the morons clear about the story.

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Here are some other and minor notes regarding specific scenes and lines:

Page 7
On Page 5, Celeste's mother says that she was killed on Good Friday. Here on Page 7, Rougon says that Celeste was shot among a group of hostages "last May." Good Friday always comes just before Easter. In 1943, which I assume to be the year in which Celeste was killed, Good Friday fell on April 23. If I've got my dope straight, Good Friday never falls in May.

Page 31
Here are some of those delirium shots that I spoke about.

Page 40
I don't believe that a reputable bank official would come across with a client's address and telephone number as readily as the assistant manager does here—unless Gerard bribed him.

Page 73
The script makes quite a bit of business about the girl, Joyce, on Pages 40, 41, and 44, and then she disappears. She seems pretty useless to me. I expect something more about her, and don't get it.

Page 103
If I have read the script accurately, it is here on Page 73 that Madeline first admits that Vaudrec is living, and indeed it is the first absolute assurance Gerard has that Vaudrec is living.

Page 114
On Pages 16, 34 and 42, the script makes a repeated point out of the fact that Gerard has a bum arm. For a guy with a bum arm, he's doing awfully well—and with both hands—in these fight scenes on Pages 103 and 104.

Page 114
Even if we assume that Gerard is completely confident about Madeline by this time, he seems awfully careless to me—cracking out with the information that Santayana is leader of the local
underground. And on Page 120 he seems even more careless—taking Madeline to an actual meeting of the underground, and letting her hear all the plans. No wonder he got caught and put in prison when he was working with the underground in France.

Page 132 Madeline reveals that she has been at a meeting of the underground. It seems to me that this would be mighty startling news, coming from Perchon's own wife, and I think Perchon's first thought would be: why didn't she tell me this before? But Perchon doesn't seem at all suspicious. Only Von Strahl seems suspicious.

Here's an added note:

On Page 20, it is represented that Gerard is in South America on a mission requiring delicacy, and that he must not arouse suspicion. He goes to the trouble of identifying himself as an electrical engineer—apparently by way of disguise—and then this well known member of the French underground keeps right on using his real name, the same one he used in the Nazi prison, and he goes around shooting off his puss about the Nazis and picking quarrels with Nazi bodyguards. It seems to me that he goes out of his way to act suspicious.