

THE BRICK FOXHOLE

or

THE PEACE TIME HITLER'S CHILDREN

or

LET'S MAKE THREE STARS

or

A POWELL PICTURE FOR \$250,000

or

HOW CAN YOU LOSE?

Dear Charlie and Bill:

The variety of titles alone suggests what fecund material this is. As a few executives will attest (and as I myself admit) on the question of titles my I.Q. is about as low as an I.Q. can be. But this is irrelevant.

This is the prospectus you suggested I write on THE BRICK FOXHOLE

I believe FOXHOLE can be made for \$250,000. This way: Dmytryk, Paxton and I, at our present rate of picture making, turn out two pictures a year. Say this picture is done for the 1947 schedule. Consider this as an additional picture; a third picture from all of us. This means that we are charged our normal rates on two pictures and on this a certain fixed fee -- say \$5,000 apiece, or nothing if we can keep Leon's blood pressure from engulfing us all.

This picture will be shot in 21-25 days, reducing

production expense to a minimum. Dmytryk has agreed that this can be done if the schedule is well planned and if the sets are clearly visualized before the picture starts. (The precedent is THE INFORMER which John Ford shot in 18 days.) This is a highly practical plan of operation. Dmytryk knows how to shoot fast and he will be helped by a tight script without one superfluous scene, a script written and timed for length.

On the question of the cast: The plan is to use our boys, Mitchum, Tierney, Bill Williams, etc., and where the group we have is not satisfactory, to look among the returned veterans for new and interesting personalities. As we discussed - the opportunity for making stars is not at all remote. The characters in this book are all dynamite. We should come through with at least one star if the boys are carefully selected. (Precedent: DESTINATION TOKYO. Out of this Warners got Robert Hutton, William Prince and Dane Clark.)

Dick Powell is very interested in this project. Powell's dough is pretty high for us if we expect to bring it in for \$250,000. But maybe it can be done. If the production cannot afford the \$50,000, perhaps the studio will be willing to arrange some percentage deal with him.

The girls in the cast are fairly simple. There are two. Neither of the parts is large but one is dynamite. The girl, Ginny, has the earmarks of a star-making role. The other one, Mary, is simply cast with some newcomer.

The story changes (which I've incorporated in the enclosed synopsis) are simple and in no wise distort the meaning of Brooks' book. Here they are:

- 1st) The war is over. The soldiers are on terminal leave or are awaiting discharge.
- 2nd) The incident which propels Jeff's misery. In the book it is the chance overhearing of scuttlebutt in the barracks - regarding his wife's unfaithfulness. In the book this is the straw that makes a lonely, unhappy fellow even more lonely and unhappy. The coincidence of this is invalid. The change would go something like this: Mary and Jeff have had a fight. It doesn't matter about what. Some difference regarding their future, where they will live, how they will live, what his job will be when he gets out. It is not important that a major issue should involve them. Something slight will intensify the misery and loneliness of an already miserable guy. In the midst of this, a letter comes from a friend which relates that Mary was out with an old beau of hers. Subsequently the episode turns out to be innocent but it serves the purpose of starting Jeff's story.
- 3rd) This is a story of personal fascism as opposed to organized fascism. The story, in a very minor sense to be sure, indicates how it is possible for us to have a gestapo, if this country should go fascist. A character like Monty would qualify brilliantly for the leadership of the Belsen concentration camp. Fascism hates weakness in people; minorities. Monty hates fairies, negroes, jews and foreigners. In the book Monty murders a fairy. He could have murdered a negro, a foreigner or a jew. It would have been the same thing. In the picture he does murder a jew. This analysis, incidentally, is absolutely correct in the opinion of the author. The picture would deal exclusively with Monty's anti-semitism.
- 4th) Ginny's being a whore. We could suggest this as many pictures have suggested whores by indirection. She would be a B girl, working in a barroom. She is kind to Jeff, warms up to him, is maternal to him. She manages to

fill a gap in his loneliness. She would like a man like Jeff for her own. But the circumstances of the war (that is over) have caused a distortion in her, i.e. made her a whore, that will prevent her now from ever achieving a normal life. She is a pathetic child of a woman, and yet is capable of great anger and passion as shown in the scene when she is cross-examined by Keeley and Jeff's wife.

- 5th) The policeman, Finlay. A very good cop, incidentally. He would be a Roman Catholic and an Irishman. He understands anti-semitism because he's Irish and a Catholic. He understands it more clearly than other people because his grandfather, who immigrated to this country from Ireland, was murdered in a riot against the Irish people. This actually happened in New York City and Philadelphia in the last century. He would be our spokesman.
- 6th) The final and concluding sequences are due for an overhaul. The fight between Monty and Keeley in the museum is tough to swallow. Monty's death is a must, of course. And it may be that he will be killed by Keeley. For the present we are looking for a series of taut suspense sequences during which the soldiers led by Keeley try to trap Monty and then finally succeed.

I believe we could enlist the help of Justice Frank Murphy in this picture. Perhaps he would agree to speak a foreword to the picture as representative of his committee. It would do an incalculable amount of good.

Dmytryk, Paxton and I want to make this picture for two reasons. First, we are ambitious. We want to make fine pictures. This will make a fine picture.

Secondly, and more important, is this: Anti-semitism is not declining as a result of Hitler's defeat. The recent negro race riots even in a high school (an unheard of event in

this country) is symptomatic of the whole cancer. Anti-semitism and anti-negroism will grow unless heroic measures can be undertaken to stop them. This picture is one such measure.

This will never in our hands be a depressing pamphlet. It will have all the rugged excitement and speed of MURDER, MY SWEET and a white hot issue to boot.

The enclosed synopsis merely indicates how the picture can be done. I have not included any of the magnificent scenes that Brooks has written, many of which can be inserted intact.

Adrian Scott to Charlie [Koerner] and Bill [Dozier], c. spring 1946.

Courtesy Adrian Scott Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming-Laramie.