'STORM CENTER' COURSE

Forthcoming Drama Followed Rugged Trail Before Reaching the Screen

By DANIEL TARADASH

The writer is making his di-of the very few producers who rectorial debut with "Storm thinks such a picture ought to Center" which arrives at the be made, You do it by camou-Normandie Theatre on Saturday. flaging it with an innocuous

HOLLYWOOD.

assessor of its merits. But I can and personalities of the indussay, with no modesty at all, try's history accept." You do deserves to be called "great." it by hanging on after the lady The great thing about it is that it was made.

For by all rules and rotes, by all traditions and precedents, by all normal Hollywood values, the Genesis story and screen play which wouldn't and daren't be made.

creation of a lunatic. And on both. the positive side, it is about a be loyal to its own traditions Twentieth Century - Fox. He ing Reis died. rather than afraid of another's went to the front office and propaganda.

Blueprint

title and never revealing its sub-3 the director and co-author ject-matter through the long of the motion picture months you work on the story "Storm Center," I can and screen play. You do it by hardly claim to be a fair having one of the great actresses walks out, by not acceding to time we were really under way. again.

The idea for a story about Elick Moll and I wrote well over book-burning and guilt by as her first film in nineteen years five years ago shouldn't, couldn't, sociation was only as far away -promptly at 9 A.M. She didn't "Storm Center" is a dangerous 1950. We thought there was reasons and emotions which picture about dangerous ideas. material here for an exciting must remain her own, she quit. It is about the burning of books and different film, one in which The film was off again. and the assassination of char- we could say something we felt acter. It is about gossip and its deeply about our country-an He set about to find another peculiar and particular impact opportunity which screen writers star and signed Barbara Stan-on children. It is about faith in rarely have. Unfortunately, we wyck for the role. A new startthe headlines and distrust of the feared nobody would buy it or ing date was set. The film was intellectual. It is about political make it. Yet there were two- on again. ambition disguised as patriot- if perhaps only two-producers ism. At is about the unpredict- in Hollywood we might shoot Columbia had reached an imable line of cause and effect through the heart: Stanley Kra-which can start with the ban-mer and Julian Blaustein, We decided to part company. Once ning of a book and end with the took dead aim and got them decided to part company. Once

way to serve one's country is to together), was a producer at the summer of 1953, when Irvraved about our idea; and was written the screen play of That such ideas might deserve the other hand, had an independ-tion of "Picnic." Both were Coaviewing, that they might serve ent company and could make lumbia pictures and I was peras the basis for warm and stir- what he pleased under his re-sona grata at the studio. And ring drama is beside the point, leasing deal with Columbia then, most unexpectedly, Presi-You just don't make movies However, he recognized the podent Eisenhower went to Dart-litically explosive aspects of our mouth and spoke out against material and we all decided that book burning. I bustled to Co-

Library," not being able to think of a duller or less controversial label. We refused to tell anyone what we were working on as we wrote the screen play.

One memorable afternoon we took the finished script to a house on a hill and I read it to Mary Pickford. Her enthusiasm bordered on the ecstatic as she agreed to play the central role of Alicia Hull.

Setbacks

Kramer selected a talented and sensitive director, Irving Reis, to guide the film, and shooting was scheduled for the summer of 1952. At the last moment, the picture was postponed.

But Kramer is a stubborn and courageous man and in the fall production started again. This the cold fact that the film has Miss Pickford made tests, her been refrigerated time and costumes were designed, sets were built, actors signed. And Miss Pickford arrived at the first day's rehearsal—to make

Kramer remained undaunted.

But not for long. Kramer and ook dead aim and got them again "The Library" went into the icebox. And the misadven-Blaustein, a very old friend of tures that had beset the venperson who believes the best mine (we had gone to college ture reached a sad climax in

A year passed. By then I had told he was raving and respect-"From Here to Eternity" and fully turned down. Kramer, on was working on the film adaptalifetime, you do. You do this secrecy was the better part of lumbia executives, questioned first by selling your idea to one valor. We dubbed the story "The them on the status of "The Library" and learned that it, along with other unproduced Kramer scripts, now belonged to the studio. I suggested that the temperature of the times had changed. I proclaimed it a civic duty to make the picture. I even went so far as to insist it would make money. I dropped a quotation from "Measure For Measure" on their desks; it read: "Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win, by fearing to attempt."

Green Light

Early in 1955, Julian Blaustein and I formed the Phoenix Corporation and made a producing-releasing deal with Columbia. Through the years, Blaustein had never lost his own desire to make "The Library." Now he took the screen play to Bette Davis. She not only would do it but said she had to do it. Blaustein and I went to Harry Cohn, the president of Columbia, and offered to make the picture for nothing. waiving the kind of guaranteed fee we were to receive on other films, and gambling on the possibility of profits. The next day he told us to go ahead.

"Storm Center" (the final title of "The Library") was shot almost entirely in Santa Rosa, Calif., a small town fifty miles north of San Francisco. In the adjacent county, Marin, a selfappointed censor, was vigorously conducting a book-banning cam-paign. She wrote Bette Davis, warning her about the questionable nature of our picture, reminding her of her children, and advising her to walk out of the film. Bette Davis replied that she believed her children would always be proud of her for doing "Storm Center."

I believe mine will, too.