

Los Angeles, California
November , 1947.

Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc.
Burbank, California

Gentlemen:

You have submitted to me as the literary material to be used as the basis of the first photoplay in which I am to appear under my contract with you dated August 8, 1947, the story "INSPECTOR GENERAL" by Nikolai Gogol, and you have also submitted to me a rough outline (written by Sylvia Fine) indicating the manner in which the screenplay based on said story is to be written and developed. A copy of said rough outline is attached hereto.

With the understanding that the screenplay for said first photoplay is to be written and developed by Ben Hecht and Charles Lederer in the manner indicated in the attached rough outline, I hereby approve said story "INSPECTOR GENERAL". It is my further understanding that I shall portray the character referred to in said story as "Ivan Alexandrovich Chlestakoff", but that the name of said character will be changed in the screenplay and in the photoplay.

Although, with respect to said story "INSPECTOR GENERAL" I have waived and do hereby waive the requirement that a detailed treatment thereof, of reasonable length, be submitted to me as provided in paragraph 26 of said contract, this waiver is made with the understanding that it applies solely to the story above referred to and shall not apply with respect to any other stories which you may from time to time submit to me. In order to avoid any misunderstanding between us in the future, may I state that if I should at any time suggest the purchase of any story or material, such suggestion is not to be deemed to be approval of the story or material so suggested, and that (except for the story "INSPECTOR GENERAL") the procedure set forth in paragraph 26 of the contract above referred to is to be adhered to.

Yours very truly,

(Danny Kaye)

It is our understanding that the screen play based on Gogol's INSPECTOR GENERAL to be written by Ben Hecht and Charles Lederer will contain the following elements and that all details unsuppliable at this time will be in keeping with the broader aspects outlined here.

Danny is a soldier who has just finished fighting in some minor offshoot of the Napoleonic wars. There will be an opening sequence to establish Danny's character which can best be described as Chaplinesque - pure in heart - good will to men, but although ingenuous still ingenious. He is a little man concerned with little things. This sequence will also explain why his return from the war was at least ten days after everybody else. As he approaches his native city he is filled with eagerness and anticipation of the warm welcome he is about to receive, - dusts off his makeshift and shabby costume, possibly stops on the very outskirts to pluck a wild flower and sets it jauntily in some unlikely place. Practically running into town he shrieks at the first person he meets "I'm home - I'm home." The answer he gets is the equivalent of "So what?"

It develops that the town is sick and tired of greeting returned soldiers. They are tired of closing up their shops to have parades and throw confetti. They assure him that if he had come home last week he might have gotten a parade. But not this week. They are ~~also~~ tired. It also develops that his girl is married, his job is filled, and that there is no point in his remaining, so he fares forth in search of a new town and a new life. As he gets to the town in which the main action of our story is to take place, he falls in with a crafty, world-wise fellow who Svengali's him much as the race track tipster who changes your mind not only about the horse you bet but the kind of popcorn you buy.

This town is Gogol's town containing all the petty officials who constantly try to outdo and outhoodwink each other and who at this particular time are very apprehensive about the rumored arrival of the Inspector General. As in Gogol's play they make the brilliant deduction that nobody as smart as the Inspector General must be would come to town in anything but disguise. In order to find out what was really going on in town he would pretend to be a very unimportant visitor. On second thought he would probably turn up as a vagrant. They then decide that Danny being the most unlikely looking new person in

town, he must be the Inspector General. It is Danny's impulse to tell them at once that they are mistaken, that he is not the Inspector General at all; but his new found friend persuades him otherwise. (He might accomplish this by having deliberately gotten Danny into debt for a very large meal or rooms at the Inn or by knowingly allowing him to commit some offense for which he could be jailed) At any rate the great hoax is on, - the crafty one using this to further his own ends and Danny having no suspicion of this until about the end of the second act.

Very important in the cast of characters we meet in town is a family who has been rooked out of money and prestige by the present town officials. A very important member of this family is the girl with whom Danny falls in love. By his attention to her and the preference he shows her over the Mayor's daughter, (who has set her cap for him), he stands the town on its ear socially because it now becomes quite comme if faut to treat this hitherto despised and disgraced family like royalty. (We expect the girl's part to be important enough for a player of some substance to want to play it) Whether or not the real Inspector General comes in at the end of the second act depends on how much material that circumstance would afford, but in the end, of course, Danny is exposed and will leave the town; - himself no better off than when he entered it but the town much better for his having been there. If it is at all feasible the girl will leave with him.

Musical numbers, comic ballet, etc. will be carefully worked in to further rather than stop the plot. The supporting characters will be drawn in the most part from the original play.

This, of course, is only a rough outline of the elements that Mr. Wald, Mr. Lederer, Mr. Hecht and myself have already discussed. We feel, however, that there is enough here to go right into screen play as soon as we are agreed on the exact story outline and not take the time to do a detailed treatment.

cc: Jerry Wald
Roy Obring
Charles Lederer
George W. Cohen
Morris Stoller

Sylvia Fine