

“WHY POLISH BEER IS HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH”

By

Hans Kracauer

(10 minute comedy short)

Hans Kracauer
1133 9th Street #205
Santa Monica, CA 90403
Tel: 212.769.3737
E-Mail: Xerxes87@aol.com

(Note: I'm a WGA writer. My focus is outrageous comedy feature screenplays. To learn more, simply go to my screenplay web site: WWW.MANICMOONBEAMS.COM)

A HEARINGS CHAMBER IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

AN OVERHEAD SIGN READS “THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RACE AND GENDER INSENSITIVITY IN ADVERTISING.”

A THIRTIESH COPYWRITER (HENCEFORTH DESIGNATED AS “ME”) IS SEATED IN FRONT OF THE STERN-LOOKING COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Sir, you’re an advertising copywriter, are you not?.

ME

Guilty.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

I suppose you know why you were summoned to testify in front of this committee.

ME

You needed a fall guy. Your committee was hungry for a crucifixion. I’m the perfect candidate to nail to the cross.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Don’t play smart with me. You know perfectly what you did. It centers on a certain television commercial you wrote.

ME

Oh that. Seems to have caused quite a hullabaloo

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Yes, it did. Tell us what made you do it. What circumstances led you – a law abiding copywriter --- to commit such a deed?

ME

From the beginning?

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

From the beginning.

ME

Well, it began as just another day in advertising. I was deep in negotiations with the Devil about the sale of my soul. Although I offered to slash my price in half, the Devil still wasn't interested. He

mumbled something about hell being in an economic crunch. His

ME (CONT'D)

budget for the current fiscal year had been drastically cut. I then offered to sell him my soul for a song. He claimed a song was still too high a price. Next thing I knew, he vanished.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Sir, I believe you're lying. The Devil doesn't have to haggle. . He can grab any soul he wants. Why didn't he snatch your soul then and there?

ME

Beats me. But then I explored my other options. I knew there was a huge black market in human organs. How much, I wondered, could I get for my soul on that market. Plenty, probably. After all, a soul was a valuable human organ too ... even if it happened to be invisible. Just then my art director burst in. Little did I suspect that the news he bore would foreshadow the most severe trial yet of the organ in question. Our advertising agency --- The Idea Factory --- had been handed the task of introducing a new Polish beer to the American market. Its name was . Zywiec. The assignment came with one caveat. The client (actually the beer's New York distributor) was convinced that America would never go for a Polish beer. So we were forbidden to mention Poland --- the beer's country of origin. "Screw him" we said."Poland is our best hook."

(pointing to a huge screen behind them)

Well, here's that commercial. Although it only ran once.

A MAN ON A HORSE RIDES BY THE STATUE OF LIBERTY. HE IS GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO, ONE OF POLAND'S GREATEST HEROES AND PATRIOTS. THE GENERAL SPEAKS WITH A THICK POLISH ACCENT AT ALL TIMES.. EVEN WHEN HE LATER RATTLES OFF (IN PERFECT CONNOISSEUR EXPERTISE) THE BEER FERMENTATION PROCESS.

HE STOPS AND LOOKS UP AT THE STATUE.

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

Hey, long time no see!

THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

(astonished)

General Kosciuszko! It's been centuries! How's Poland?

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

Pretty good. Say, you look like you could use a beer.

THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

(stepping down from her pedestal)

Yeah ... this job can be a killer. What do you have?

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

(pulling out a bottle of Zywiec)

Polish beer. Zywiec.

THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

(laughing)

Polish beer? I just drink American beer.

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

(opening bottle and handing it to her)

Look sweetheart ... open your mind. Your lips will smack each other with delight.

THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

(drinking)

This tastes fantastic!

(looking at bottle)

Zyweez?

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

(correcting her)

Zywiec!

A BEAUTY SHOT OF A BOTTLE OF ZYWIEC. NEXT TO IT IS A
MAGNIFICENTLY OVERFLOWING STEIN OF BEER. SUPERIMPOSED OVER
THE SHOT ARE THE WORDS :

POLISH BEER.

OPEN YOUR MIND.

YOUR LIPS WILL SMACK EACH OTHER WITH DELIGHT.

VOICES UNDER THIS SHOT

Statue Of Liberty: Zywooz?

General Kosciuszko: Zywiec.

Statue of Liberty: Zeevook?

General Kosciuszko: Zywiec.

CLOSEUP OF STATUE OF LIBERTY

THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

(looking at bottle)

Can't pronounce it.

(belches)

But I ...

(belches again)

... love it!

On the night before the shoot, I entered my bedroom and climbed into bed. Next, I closed my eyes and began counting Clios. But somehow I just couldn't fall asleep. Or was I mistaken? Did I fall asleep after all? Because --- and this is the tricky part --- here's exactly what I recall happening next.

THERE'S A LOUD BANGING ON MY BEDROOM DOOR. I SIT UP IN ALARM.
THE BANGING GROWS STILL LOUDER.

ME

Who ... who's there?

A VOICE

General Kosciuszko!

ME

(dismissing the idea)

Go back to Poland!

THE BANGING NOW BECOMES DEAFENING. SUDDENLY THE DOOR BURSTS OPEN. IN RIDES GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO ON TOP OF HIS HORSE. HE'S DECKED OUT IN FULL POLISH MILITARY REGALIA. THE DOOR SLAMS SHUT AGAIN.

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

(looking me over contemptuously)

So you're the copywriter that's turned me into a loud-mouthed TV pitchman.

ME

(open-mouthed)

Are you really who I think you are?

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

What's the matter --- are you stupid too? You see the uniform, the medals, the beard?

ME

Yes.

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO
Am I Ulysses S Grant?

ME
No.

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO
Then I'm General Thaddeus Kosciuszko. Your worst Polish nightmare.

HE JUMPS OFF HIS HORSE. PUSHING ME BACK ON MY BED, HE TAKES OUT
SOME ROPE AND STARTS TYING ME UP.

ME
(struggling)
What the hell are you doing?

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO
Preparing to talk some common sense into you.

ME
That wouldn't be Polish common sense, would it? Like a bullet in the head?

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO
I want you to change that TV spot.

ME
What's the matter with it?

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO
I'm a revered Polish historical figure. I shouldn't be peddling beer.

ME
Why not? American historical figures do it.

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO
Peddle beer?

ME
Peddle everything. I've seen Abraham Lincoln peddle it all --- from used cars
and fast food to special discounts at topless bars.

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO
Abraham Lincoln used to be a lawyer. Everyone knows lawyers are all whores.

THE GENERAL HAS NOW FINISHED STRAPPING ME TO THE BED. HE MAKES SURE THE ROPE IS IN PLACE. HE THEN GOES OVER TO HIS HORSE, REACHES INTO A CANVAS BAG AND PULLS OUT TWO BOTTLES OF ZYWIEC. HE OPENS BOTH AND OFFERS ONE TO ME.

ME

Thanks. I'd love to join you but I'm all tied up.

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

That's easily fixed.

WITH ONE HAND, HE HOLDS A BOTTLE TO MY MOUTH. WITH THE OTHER HAND, HE HOLDS A BOTTLE TO HIS OWN MOUTH. WE DRINK.

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

Hits the spot, doesn't it? I believe there's nothing like a good libation when two men reason together.

(cheerfully)

Even if one man is marked for death by strangulation if the reasoning fails.

THE GENERAL NOW TAKES ANOTHER SWIG FROM HIS BOTTLE. AND I TAKE ANOTHER FROM MINE. AS THE EXCHANGE CONTINUES, THE GENERAL PROVES TO BE AN EXTREMELY CONSIDERATE HOST. HE KEEPS FEEDING ME BOTTLES OF ZYWIEC ... AND I KEEP IMBIBING THEM.

ME

(hiccuping)

You're looking at this the wrong way. Listen, aren't you a Polish patriot?

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

The greatest.

ME

Then isn't it your patriotic duty to help the Polish economy?

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

(drinking)

By encouraging the consumption of an addictive substance like alcohol?

ME

Hey, you're not hurting Poles. It's strictly for the U.S. market.

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

Are you crazy? I don't want to antagonize America. You have me offering a bottle of beer to one of their most sacred symbols ... the Statue of Liberty.

ME

So? It's a very nice gesture.

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

It's a very disrespectful gesture.

ME

Anyone can see you're just being sociable with the lady.

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

Anyone can see I'm just making a pass at the lady.

ME

A pass at the Statue of Liberty? All it means is that you're trying to quench her thirst.

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

All it means is I'm trying to get into her pants.

ME

I see. You're completely out of your 18th century mind!

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

A come-on is a come-on!

ME

Oh, please! There are no sexual connotations in one artifact of the past offering a drink to another artifact of the past.

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

(sarcastically)

Of course not. And there are no sexual connotations in my calling her "sweetheart". No sexual connotations in my saying to her:

(mimicking himself in the TV spot)

"Look sweet heart. Open your mind! Your lips will smack each other with delight"

"s

ME

In advertising we call that a positioning line.

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

In Poland we call that a "let's screw" line.

WE CONTINUE DRINKING. I'M GETTING MORE AND MORE PLASTERED. THE HOURS SLIP BY. NIGHT TURNS TO EARLY DAWN. NOW I'M UNEQUIVOCALLY SMASHED TO THE GILLS. AND FROM THE WORSHIPFUL WAY I GAZE AT THE GENERAL, IT'S CLEAR THAT I'VE UNDERGONE A COMPLETE CONVERSION.

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

OK, then it's a deal. I'll appear in your TV commercial ... but you'll make the changes.

ME

(drunk out of my mind)

Consider them made!

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

Out goes the Statue of Liberty!

ME

Out! You're so right. Can't have you treating America's national symbols as sex objects.

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

And out goes that shot of me on my horse!

ME

Out! You on a horse ... bad idea! It projects an image that's much too war-like.

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

And out goes my personal endorsement of Zywiec... and every claim I make that Zywiec is a superior beer.

ME

Absolutely out! Can't offend the other countries in the European Union who make great-tasting beers.

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

Here's how the revised TV commercial will go: I'll appear ... dressed not in a uniform but in civilian clothes.

ME

Wonderful touch!

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

I'll talk about the lager fermentation process. First, I'll describe bottom fermentation which is popular in our part of Europe and which results in such beers as

Pilsner and Dortmund. Then I'll contrast it with top fermentation. That's the process popular in Britain resulting in such beers as ale and stout. While I talk, we'll see a roll call of beers scrawling up right behind me. Included in that roll call will be Zywiec Beer. That way, no beer-making country in the European Union can accuse Zywiec of being militaristic or Polish-centric.

ME

Wow! The client will love it!

GENERAL KOSCIUSZKO

Ready to go on the set with those changes?

ME

Absolutely, your Generalness!

THE GENERAL NOW UNTIES ME. I OFFER HIM A DRUNKEN SALUTE. HE AND HIS HORSE MOVE TOWARDS THE DOOR. I STAGGER BEHIND THEM. HE OPENS THE DOOR. THERE --- SLIGHTLY HUNCHED OVER --- IS THE STATUE OF LIBERTY. SHE'S OBVIOUSLY BEEN LOOKING THROUGH THE KEYHOLE. SHE STRAIGHTENS UP. SHE'S IN A TOWERING RAGE.

THE GENERAL RIDES OFF ON HIS HORSE. THE STATUE OF LIBERTY MOVES FACE TO FACE WITH ME.

THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

(in a fury)

You idiot! You pixilated, puerile pipsqueak! You let a foreign authority figure talk you into shoving me ... the emblem of your country ... straight out of the picture.

ME

(belching)

You don't understand. The General thought that offering a national monument like yourself some beer was no way to treat a lady.

THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

I'll teach you how to treat a lady.

WITH THAT, SHE PUNCHES ME SMACK ON THE NOSE. THEN SHE GRABS ME AND PROCEEDS TO PUMMEL THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS OUT OF ME.

IT'S A SPECTACULAR THRASHING. AS IT CONTINUES, WE HEAR THE VOICE OF THE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND MY OWN VOICE.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Just as I suspected. In your commercial --- and in your

narrative --- you demonstrate outrageous racial insensitivity. You depict a famous Polish war hero trying to molest one of our most sacred national symbols.

ME

I also show his good side. He wasn't going to prostitute himself just to sell some beer. I'd say it was a portrait of a man in all his contradictory attributes.. A fully dimensional human being.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

I see. You have a graduate degree in being a weasel. And talk about gender insensitivity! You depict a revered female historical figure soliciting sexual attention from a uniformed guy on horseback!

ON THE SCREEN, I KEEP BEING HURLED AROUND LIKE A WET RAG.

ME

Have it your way! But I'm bursting with pride. After all, it's not every day that the Lady In The Harbor takes time out from being a beacon to the world to personally beating you to a bloody pulp.

THE STATUE OF LIBERTY PUMPS HER FIST DOWN THE TOP OF MY HEAD.
THEN --- WITH ALL HER MIGHT ----- SHE SLAMS ME AGAINST THE WALL.

MUSIC ---- "STARS AND STRIPES FOREVER" ----- BLACKOUT.
