

THE CARD-PLAYERS - KORTSPILLERNE

By Johan Galtung

THEME: there are several themes. But the basic theme is the vicious circle that seems to direct our (humankind's) policies in connection with East and West, armament/disarmament, peace/war. What I am basically concerned with is the relation between a superpower, the government in a small, client country in Western Europe (not necessarily Norway - rather a mix of them) and the "people", meaning not necessarily the peace movement, but people conscious enough to have some doubts about what happens. Actually, since precisely doubt is going to be a major point (yet showing that the system has its own logic and goes on in spite of doubts), "people" should include different types of persons. To be avoided would be any bias in the sense that the good people (the brightest, the straight) are against the "system" and the bad people (the dumbest, the crooks, the corrupt) are in favor. A certain bias in favor of women and children should be there, however -- people who see the totality, with a holistic approach as opposed to the narrowness of the "Mannerspiele," Missile-counting. They ask the good questions, they see the system and the vicious circle better than others - in my experience.

The basic theory, from a social science point of view, is spelt out in the two papers "US Foreign Policy as Manifest Theology" and "The Cold War as Autism." There is a covenant, a pact

- between God and the superpower as Chosen People
- between the superpower and the client government; leader-follower
- between client government and people - don't rock the boat.

This gives us four major groups of actors, and I might like to include God, trying to show His problems in this connection. Not easy, but essential to capture the nature of the US. I would also like to include the other side, the Soviet Union as chosen by History, and the mirror images of each other. The names US and SU should be avoided, though instead I could imagine Big Brother and Bolshoi Brat'. And for the client countries names like Little Brother and Malenkij Brat' might be used. A meeting in NATO, then, becomes a meeting between BB and LB1, LB2, LB3 and so on - there are some ideas about how such meetings can be portrayed.

The title of the play, The Card-Players, would derive from a very simple idea: the governments, the BB-LB alliance, playing cards with the rest of us. The callousness, the willingness to sacrifice the whole population in the name of some abstract principle, would be one basic point - but by no means the only one.

The action would unfold along the usual cycle from post Second World War history: a new type of weapon is invented, it is launched as a /modernization/bargaining piece/way of getting the upper hand/ and so on; people get frightened and think this gets

out of control; LB governments are caught in the middle between their own people and the loyalty to Big Brother; one way out is to call a disarmament conference which, of course, collapses; the next way out is to call a summit meeting (Geneva, Reykjavik) which also collapses and in the meantime a still worse weapon is being invented. The circularity of this whole process would be a major message, the play should end exactly as it starts, only at a worse level so that the viewers themselves can sense precisely how the next round would unfold.

Concretely I would suggest using Star Wars and some of the material from William Broad's excellent book The Star Warriors and some of the material about how and why this was launched as a defensive weapon, SDI - and how gullible the peace movement is in accepting discussing the issue on these terms. The willingness to give up nuclear weapons derives from having invented something "better." But within that something there are still new systems coming---

I would then introduce all kinds of complications, to make this more like the real world, without losing sight of the clear structure and process as outlined above.

Thus, I would like to have the Japanese spying on both, doing that very well, trying to sell not so much the recordings as the (miniaturized) machines. To both, of course.

I would like to have a government spy in the peace movement meeting, and a (secret) member of the peace movement as cabinet member. The viewers would see this when the same people suddenly appear in different contexts (Iris Murdoch).

A love affair between a leading peacenik and a top hawk could belong, only care lest it becomes too vulgar. There are real world cases. I would use it to see the hawk soften, not the dove harden, however - only that the process nonetheless continues.

The mafia element (Christic Institute report) should be there, not to leave the impression that top foreign policy is according to constitutional rules.

A meeting, the real summit, between God and History, might be a good idea. Their feeling of despair faced with these run-away clients of theirs, with their self-righteous texts could be interesting also because it offers a way out: the reinterpretation of God/History.

The highly sexist and sexual language of the policy-makers, as described by Carol Cohn in her paper, should certainly be used - not so much to make the play more entertaining as to show how these people try to avoid understanding what they are doing. Great care should be taken to avoid that attention is taken away from

the key message of the play.

Synchrony: if rotation of stage is impossible, then spotlight on the group actors, knowing that the other groups are a few feet away. Some actors should be seen sneaking from one group to the other.

It might be interesting to set a certain tone by having key persons say a couple of words in their own language. American (not English), Russian, Japanese - maybe also a role for the Chinese (translation in the program).

We might have one actor planted in the public, he or perhaps rather she suddenly stands up, sees the play from the outside and tries to break its logic, protests. We might also have a group of actors storming the scene, wanting to take over one or more of the groups and direct the course of action away from the unavoidable. They could then be corrupted, or rejected by all the "real" actors.

Public participation in the play itself, or inviting them to make a different, more "happy" ending?

We could suddenly have some texts flash across the stage, like in the marvelous movie A Room With a View. Or, else, the Elizabethan clown, with a dunce cap, who in a pedantic manner "explains," with under- and overstatements, yet also makes more clear what happens. In other words, some of the Pirandello tricks, the double, triple level of the play.

There should be parallelism between East and West, but not total - that would be unrealistic. And the message should not be that all the processes are autistic, there is also something real in the East West conflict.

Important to show that even if they want to break out of the vicious circle they are unable to do so, the system is simply too strong for them.

Show how they want to be strong, to be in control, the macho role in all of this, the facial expressions, how there is tenderness underneath - but the role distorts them - the co-opted peacenick.

Include in some way or the other the Bible and the cake/key.

ALL EVENTS ARE FICTITIOUS, BUT SOME EVENTS ARE MORE FICTITIOUS THAN OTHERS. POINTS TO BE USED, EXAMPLES:

Shevardnadze's points about STAR PEACE, not STAR WARS; not politics of strength, but strength of politics.

Van der Stoehl's interview in Den Volkskrant some years ago, about

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the NATO meeting. BB foreign minister comes, hands out a document, there is almost no discussion, nobody dares, "who do you think you are," also the terminology of the BB foreign minister is so difficult.

The lb foreign minister who is making himself heard in the presence of BB, but in practice only asks "can we hurry up the meeting, my plane is leaving" - and yet boasts at home about what happened (lots of cases like that).

The peace movement person who makes deals, "soften your protest and there might be a position for you somewhere," and then goes to the meeting telling how he really stood up!

The deals across the East-West divide, at Big level and little level, how they go back home and boast of things that never happened, the common interest along the card-players of the two camps.

The peacenik in the lb government who spells out what the deployment of missiles etc. means, in the cabinet meeting, but is overruled by district politics, unemployment, technology, feeling of being in with BB, etc. And then the vote, "OK, I assume we all agree then---." "I tilfelle av en krig betyr dette sluttet på alt".

The Quisling point, "We were just ten years ahead of time," put that type into the government. He is suddenly revealed - and then says this, what is the difference? We had the Germans, you have BB?

Get in some "experts" to show how co-opted they are, and how little they have to offer relative to common sense - to the woman and the Child.