

Post-holocaust

A learning play by J. Hamou

Description.

In the 1930s Berthold Brecht did a series of "learning plays" in order for the reader or performer to understand the communist moral. Extreme situations, such as the sacrificing of one man for the sake of saving the group, were the examples. Here, as with Brecht's learning plays, the idea is that the readers or performers should try to identify themselves with the different characters in order to understand and recognise a different rhetoric. The play can be done among friends and family in homes or anywhere.

All text is collected from interviews and testimony in the Israel and the Palestinian territory of the West Bank in 2008. The material was proposed to the Israeli art magazine STUDIO after an invitation to publish an article.

Opening

An empty stage.

Suddenly ELIAS, an old orthodox Jew, is thrown in on stage.

Off stage we hear the cameraman from Nord-Deutsche Rundfunk.

Elias:

What?! What have I done?

The voice of the Cameraman:

It's a nice view from here. What is this street called?

Elias:

(confused)

Shalom Street, Peace Street if you wish.

The voice of the Cameraman:

Is it crossing the entire Nablus?

Elias:

Almost... Is this why I'm here? To answer your stupid questions?

The voice of the Cameraman:

No. We are waiting for someone important.

(pause)

Tell me a bit about yourself, old man. Where are you from?

Elias:

I'm from Israel.

The voice of the Cameraman:

No, originally.

Elias:

Hungary.

The voice of the Cameraman:

Budapest?

Elias:

Yes.

The voice of the Cameraman:

I read a book by Mr. Kertész. He has some harsh descriptions of Budapest.

Elias:

I know him; he's a Jew, AND a Nobel Prize winner.

The voice of the Cameraman:

In the book he describes the Jewish ghetto in Budapest and the way you got locked up in there.

Elias:

Tell me about it. It was terrible. Suddenly we couldn't move anywhere. We were in a prison.

The voice of the Cameraman:

Just like here.

Elias:

NO, no, no! Why does everybody compare the Holocaust with the Palestinians?

It's different here.

We need to make the wall for security reasons.

The proof, since the wall is up there is no more bombing.

Suddenly DANIEL COHN-BENDIT is thrown in on the stage. He looks very embarrassed and agitated.

Daniel:

I haven't done anything!

Elias:

Me neither!

Daniel:

What is going on here?

The voice of the Cameraman:

You are from the European Commission, right?

Daniel:

Yes?

Elias:

Hello, my name is Elias. We are very proud to welcome you to Nablus. It is an honour for me to thank the European Commissions for their aid in building the Peace Road here.

Daniel:

The European Commission is engaging in the peace process here in the West Bank. The Peace Road is a symbolic, and practical, action for all the people of Nablus.

The voice of the Cameraman:

There are not many people here though. Why are all the people using the street down there, behind the fence?

Elias:

Those are the Palestinians. They use the old road.

Daniel:

What?!

The voice of the Cameraman:

Elias, are you telling us that only Jews can use "The Peace Road"?

Elias:

It's for security reasons.

The voice of the Cameraman:

Is the European Commission giving aid for an apartheid project now?

Daniel:

I'm sure there is a misunderstanding here. Probably some security problems to be solved...

Elias:

Forget it, it's not a cliché that you can't trust the Arab...

Daniel:

I'M NOT PART of the decisions in this particular project but I'm sure the department handling the case is most aware of all implications. I will personally report the observations made. Naturally we would never support any segregating projects here. But again, I'm sure this is not the case.

Elias:

You sound like a German...

They both exit the stage to each side.

Act 1: An example.

A naturist beach outside Tel Aviv.
Everybody here is naked. The narrator, Mr. Ban, is alone on the stage to start with.

Ban:

I heard Tel Aviv is so secular that there even is a naturist beach here. Naturally, there are mostly gay people on the beach. So within minutes I had a man close to me. I asked him about the gay situation here in Israel AND in Palestine. Listen to the story DAN told me.

Four people are now entering the stage. It's DAN with his sister YAEL and SHAMIR with his sister MAHA. They are all naked too.

Dan:

Hello, my name is Dan.

Shamir:

I'm Shamir and this is my sister Maha.

(pause)

Yael:

I'm Yael, Dan's sister.

Dan:

I met Shamir on a dating site. He had such a lovely way to express himself, so gentle and sweet. So NOT Israeli. I really wanted to meet him.

Shamir:

I also wanted to meet Dan. So I asked my sister to follow me to the border.

Maha:

As if I had a choice.

Yael:

Shamir was really afraid; so Dan asked me if I also could be part of the cover up.

By the way I'm studying philosophy at the university. I'm working on a thesis investigating contemporary philosophers in modernistic city planning.

Dan:

Who cares?

Maha:

We all met at a restaurant in East Jerusalem. I think we succeeded in looking very authentic in an "Israelis meet Palestinians" kind of way.

Dan:

It was so exciting. I immediately recognized Shamir. He looked even sweeter than I imagined.

Shamir:

It was very hard not to laugh all the time. I was so excited.

Yael:

I felt I did something good. It was the first time I met with Palestinians and I was proud of Dan making this happen. I also felt I made something good for him and Shamir.

Dan:

We were so horny. I just wanted to fuck right there, on the table. We touched each other's hands and legs under the table.

Maha:

It was humiliating. We sat there like some kind of furniture while the boys got more and more horny.

Shamir:

Eventually, it was impossible to stay in the restaurant. We had to kiss and hug somewhere.

Dan:

We went for a walk until it got dark. Then we finally got a moment for our selves.

Maha:

We were parked on the street as guards.

Yael:

It was a strange situation. We knew very well what was going on behind the shag. It was a devastating silence. In the dark I got afraid, I felt we were so vulnerable, somewhere in east Jerusalem.

Maha:

Then we started to hear them. I had never heard my brother like this before. Then hearing Dan bragging on like some Israeli soldier: "harder, faster".

I looked at the Jewish girl and for some reason I felt like a whore. I couldn't hold back my tears.

Yael:

It was very strange, especially hearing my brother. He was very loud and talkative. To make it less obvious I felt the urge to speak to Maha but I didn't know what to say.

Shamir:

After we finished we were laughing so much. It was such a tension that was relieved.

Dan:

The whole situation was so absurd. Eventually, we split and promised to meet soon again. On the way home Yael said she didn't want to help me again. I got so furious, our parent's education eventually hit in, she was ashamed of me; she wanted me to be straight.

Yael:

You have to understand that homosexuality is still an issue in Israel, and I didn't want to be called a traditionalist. So there I was in East Jerusalem again.

Shamir:

Next time, Dan told me it was a problem for him bringing his sister. I was surprised, how could it be an issue? She had to help her brother. I told him that and he said it was more complicated with her.

Maha also complained but at the end of the day she knew she had to help me. If the girls didn't come, it would be too dangerous for both of us.

Maha:

Next time we stood in front of the shag a car with a group of young boys passed by. They shouted at us joyfully. I wanted to chat with them. I knew it would make the Jewish girl freak out. I really would like to see her face when the group of handsome young Palestinian men walked out of that car.

But I'm a nice girl; I just looked away.

Yael:

I thought that if this would go on for a while, I had to talk to Shamir's sister. I came up with a question that maybe was a bit inappropriate, but it was an attempt to break the ice. I asked if she was married. Maha said that she didn't speak Hebrew.

Maha:

First of all; she expects me to speak Hebrew, then she wanted me to tell her whether I'm married or not. As if it was any of her business. I replayed and asked, in Arab, if she expected to come back here again.

Yael:

I don't speak Arab.

Shamir:

So the end of our beautiful love affair was the inability of our sisters to cope with the situation. Maha refused categorically to come back and threatened to tell every one if I tried to force her. I don't know what that Jewish bitch did to her.

Dan:

I don't know why those girls freaked out so badly? How do they think it felt for us?

Everybody except Ban exit. He has been looking at the audience while the story was being told. He waits until the attention is optimal.

Ban:

I left the beach heading for Hebron. On my way through Tel Aviv, I saw an impressive number of Asiatic girls, obviously working in different homes. I felt ashamed when they curiously looked at me. These were my sisters working for the colonizers. Closer to the bus station there was a whole street with beer drinking black men. Many spoke English and I realized they too were serving the new masters here.

Black out.

Act 2: No hope.

A HUGE explosion is heard. On the stage is, laying on the floor, Ban, Dr. Awan, and his wife Mrs. Awan

Ban:

I arrived in a reinforced bus with bulletproof glass to Hebron. Next to me sat an American couple, he had his own automatic weapon and she was dressed in traditional clothes covering her head and legs. The tension was so thick one could cut in it with a knife. I was not the only one scared here. Driving down toward the centre, Palestinian kids were playing on the road, forcing the bus to slow down. One could tell the driver didn't like that. He honked his horn intensively. When we stopped I walked over towards the Palestinian gate. Dr Awan and his wife were there to meet me. Then suddenly!

A huge explosion is heard again. This time Mrs. Awan starts to pray in Arab.

Ban:

What is going on?!

Dr. Awan

Don't worry. These are sound bombs; sonic blasts you know.

Ban:

It's apocalyptic.

Dr. Awan

(laughing)

I know like Apocalypse Now.

Ban:

Hearing the prayer of Ms. Awan and seeing the military jeeps tearing up dust clouds, covering

the whole site, really framed me in the film. I heard the music of THE DOORS echoing in my mind.

The Doors:

This is the end
My only friend, the end
Of our elaborate plans, the end
Of everything that stands, the end
No safety or surprise, the end
I'll never look into your eyes...again

Can you picture what will be
So limitless and free
Desperately in need...of some...stranger's hand
In a...desperate land

They all sit up and there is absolute silence. Dr. Awan sits with a paper in front of him making drawings no one can see while he speaks. Maybe there is some music in the background.

Dr Awan:

You know; we have no country, and Israel is no country. It's just a temporary construction. No one here believes in peace. No one here believes in miracles.

Ban:

Don't you think things will settle once a peace agreement is reached?

Dr Awan:

No one believes in peace, there is no way of having two states here.

Ban:

What do you mean when you reject the two state solution?

Dr Awan:

People here don't know what freedom is. Most of us have never seen the free world. I studied in Russia so I know, but children here they don't know. Peace is naïve.

50% of the children in Hebron have nocturne neurosis. Most of them don't get a proper education. I've seen villages with epidemic cancer due to pollution problems in water-rinsing structures.

The major plan for Israel is to get rid of all Palestinians. 12000 are already in Israeli prisons. No one here believes in peace.

Whatever the White House decides will happen. But it won't be peace.

The doctor and his wife are leaving the stage. She starts mumbling her prayers again.

Ban:

Picture this; on the main square there is a huge mosque from the 17th century. Inside are the corps of the patriarchs at rest, those who started it all, I mean; Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Ishmael, etc.

So the Muslims have guarded these tombs in the most sumptuous way, each one in a separate room. Now, like some crazy post-modern project, the Jews have made a hole in the side of the mosque and stuffed a synagogue in there, like some implant.

Ban is leaving the stage. Off stage we hear him telling how he leaves Hebron while the light is fading out.

Two men dressed in black with black flags and black "kippahs" enter the stage.

Man 1:

As usual we are the first ones here. It's like the anarchists are the only ones doing anything to change this crazy place.

Man 2:

Look. (Pointing toward another person entering).

The person entering has a T-shirt with Stalin's face on. This person also wears a sign saying, "Israel Communist Party refuse the invasion of Iran".

Man 1:

Why is it always like that in Israel? We are doing a demonstration against the occupation of the territories and then they come with signs saying we shouldn't invade Iran...

Man 2:

Israelis always start to talk about the prospect of getting invaded as soon as the subject is about the occupation.

During their talk GALIT EILAT enters the stage. She joins the conversation.

Galit:

It's also because the colonial structures are so present here. We are as much victims of

these structures as we are masters over the terrain.

Man 1:

From one empire to another. This place is doomed.

Man 2:

(laughing, loudly)

LONG LIVE THE EMPIRE!

Galit:

I agree; long live the Empire. At least we could move freely then. We could study in Beirut or Cairo. We could walk along the far banks of the river Jordan or go shopping in Damascus. We were free to move. Now we are locked up in this land we fought so hard for. We can't go anywhere in the Middle East, and if we go anywhere else we always have to be suspicious and afraid. What kind of freedom is that? Our privilege is our fear. No, give us back the empire!

Galit, Man 1, Man 2:

Give us back the empire, give us back the empire...

The communist:

Not even one thousand people are on this Peace March. How can one expect any peace here when people don't care any more? It was better before when we had a Kibbutz attitude, a collective consciousness, in this country.

Galit:

What country?

The Man 2:

Who's country?

They all walk out.

Act 3: Two Solutions

Someone off stage:

Exercise one: "One State Solution"

A man walks in on stage, he might wear sunglasses, and the man is General Gaddafi.

Gaddafi:

What you just witnesses the past 20 minutes are examples of colonial structures inherited in a typical nation-building project.

In Israel as well as in the Palestinian territories these colonial structures are so present that it seems impossible to reach any agreement.

While Gaddafi talks a woman enters the room. She is Cristina Fernández de Kirchner.

Gaddafi (cont.):

I have an exceptional insight in Middle Eastern and North-African politics and I think our proposition should be seen upon as the most serious attempt to stop this conflict once and for all.

First step would be to decolonize the state today called Israel. In order to show the

Palestinians that this is meant seriously we propose a one state solution called UIP, the acronym for United Israel Palestine.

Someone off stage:

What!?

Gaddafi:

Let me introduce the team behind our resolution: Mrs. Fernández de Kirchner, Chief of the UIP Constitutional Committee.

Someone off stage:

Is this some kind of joke?

Mrs. Fernández de Kirchner:

Thank you Mr. Gaddafi. I'm very proud and humbled to be appointed to such an important task. This is a historical moment...

While Mrs. Fernández de Kirchner speaks Mr. NELSON MANDELA enters the stage.

Gaddafi:

...Ladies and Gentlemen: Mr. Mandela! Chief of the UIP Truth Commission, Israeli and Palestinians should consider themselves very fortunate to have him as senior adviser for this commission.

Someone off stage:

What is he talking about?!

Mr. Mandela:

Over the 60 years, since the creation of the Israeli state, there has been increasingly more

occupations and violations of all agreements.
This place is worst of then South Africa used
to be. It's time for a change!

Gaddafi shake hands with Mrs. Fernández de Kirchner and Mr.
Mandela simultaneously standing in between them, as for a
picture.

Gaddafi:

UIP, year 0, is not only a new beginning for
two populations living in peace. It is also the
beginning of a general nuclear disarmament in
the region. It's the end of national myopia and
the beginning of a global consciousness. While
the fundamental constitution of the UIP is
written a Truth Commission will handle the
trials of all atrocities. A land-council will
divide the properties fairly between Israelis
and Palestinians, based on the new laws and a
common constitution.

Someone off stage:

That's unacceptable!

A woman off stage:

You are crazy! We have a connection to the
earth here!

Gaddafi:

Who?

The woman off stage:

It's our land!

Gaddafi:

What land?

Everyone leaves the stage.

Someone off stage:

Exercise two: "Two State solution"

Ban, the narrator, is coming in again.

Ban:

Hello, I'm Ban Ki-moon, but I'm also the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and we have a little different view on this. Remember USA initiated the roadmap to peace, the only project we have been able to agree on with the permanent members here in UN.

While Ban talks a man enters the room. He is Tony Blair.

Ban:

...and here is Mr. Blair, the Middle East envoy. We believe there can be established a two state solution. Right?

Blair:

Yes! If we can get the two parts back to the table and reestablish a trust, the peace is within reach.

Someone off stage:

When!?

Blair:

As soon as we have guarantees from both parts...

Someone off stage:

But Israel keeps bombarding Gaza and they keep constructing in the West Bank.

Blair:

We are condemning strongly Israeli position in both the mentioned cases.

Ban:

And we also urge Palestinian authorities to clamp down on all terrorist activities.

Blair:

We are working for an increased economical support towards the Palestinian state and it's institutions.

Ban:

Remember, ladies and gentlemen, this is the only proposition we have been able to agree upon.

Ban and Blair shake hands as for a photo.

Ban:

Thanks for your attention. No more questions.

The woman off stage:

You haven't answered any questions...

Ban and Blair leaves the room.

Sortie.

A woman, Mellika, is thrown in on stage. After her comes an airport security man.

Mellika:

What is my crime?

Security man:

You have done nothing wrong as far as I know. I just want to hear about your trip.

Mellika:

I told you I went to the West Bank and Tel Aviv.

Security Man:

Everybody does that exact trip; Tel Aviv - West Bank. How did you get the contacts you had in the West Bank?

Mellika:

Through friends mostly.

Security Man:

And family?

Mellika:

No.

Some security off stage:

Check her email.

Mellika:

You can't do that. It's private. If you insist I would have to talk to your superior!

Enters the superior security person.

Superior:

Well, you can just show us some of your mails to prove your point. We are not going to read them.

Melika:

Do you have a right to do that?

Superior:

It would really help.

Security Man:

I can't read this language...

Melika:

(To the superior)

So you want to keep me here?

Superior:

No, you are free to go anywhere you want.

Melika:

Exactly that's the difference between you and me.

Security Man:

What do you mean?

Melika:

I went anywhere I wanted to.

Security Man:

Why did you come to Israel?

Melika:

Who said I came to Israel?

Superior:

You are here, right?

Melika:

So I have to answer you again; I came to visit people in Tel Aviv and the West Bank.

Security Man:

What is that?

Melika:

A bus ticket to Ramallah, you can keep it as a souvenir.

Security Man:

I've been in Rammallah.

Melika:

Oh, so you are a peace activist?

Security Man:

No I'm not an activist...

He walks out. Another one comes in.

New Security Man:

Show me your paper please.

Melika:

But I just showed them to the other guy.

New Security Man:

Well, I can't see him.

Melika:

What do you want?

New Security Man:

Is that your computer?

Melika:

Yes.

New Security Man:

Open it please.

(He looks at something)

What is that?

Superior:

It's a script, right?

Melika:

Yes. It's the plan for my script.

Superior:

I could tell that. I'm following a script course myself. Actually I just finished my first Treatment.

Melika:

Well? Congratulations.

New Security Man:

Thank you. Have a nice trip.

-The End-