

**Lawyers, Guns, and Money**  
**by Dave Olson**

Note: This play was originally produced by the "United Nations group" as a team presentation the Evergreen College program "Management Strategies for a Global Society, February 2003.

--

Overview: A group of disgruntled oil field workers are rallied by well-meaning western travelers who encourage them to march to the capital to vent their grievances. Together they march to the Parliament only to meet with disinterested officials, a self-serving Prime minister and bamboozling lawyers.

**Cast:**

- \* 4 disgruntled oil field workers including one "leader" wearing special headgear
- \* 4 western travelers - preferably wearing backpacks, including one "leader"
- \* 3 oil company lawyers wearing ties and "Gashole Oil Consortium" badges
- \* Prime Minister of Shtanastan wearing a large furry hat
- \* 2 parliamentarians with bottles of vodka
- \* Narrator

**Acts:**

1) Workers and Travelers get together in a desert wasteland with oil derricks in the background, acid rain falling and the foreground scattered with tree stumps, busted trucks and blown-out tires and other miscellaneous debris.

2) Parliament buildings where the workers and travelers bring their case to the Prime Minister and oil company lawyers.

**Scene One: The Workers' discussion**

*Narrator: On a rainy day in the former Soviet, central Asian republic of "Shtanastan," several local oil workers stand around an firebarrel talking. Oddly enough, each of the workers is holding a 3X5 card with a number written in the top corner which they proceed to read in numerical order in a rather dramatic manner.*

Card # 1

Worker leader: This job is too difficult! This black goo makes me ill - I am a constantly fatigued ... plus this stinking rain burns my skin!

Card # 2

Worker 2: Quit your whining! 2 years ago we had no jobs - I remember, we ate cold potatoes that whole year, now we eat warm rutabagas for dinner!

Card#3

Worker 3: Yes, we were poor but at least we had green forests to walk in ... and the water was clean, now i spend much of pay on fresh water brought in by a truck!

Card#4

Worker 4: Plus they charge us for these horrible working uniforms! yech ... if I didn't need the rubles so bad, I wouldn't put up with it, i'm telling you! (*shaking fist at the sky*)

**Scene Two: The Travelers arrive**

*Narrator: A group of western travelers with backpacks and at least one camera enter from the left and walk towards the workers, looking around and taking pictures. They too are holding paper cards which they proceed to read in numerical order starting with #5.*

Card# 5

Traveler Leader: This doesn't look like lush green rolling hills and dense forests I saw in the tourist brochure! (*Sighing*) Well ... they must at least have a gift shop around here ...

Card #6

Traveler 2: (*Angrily*) I knew we should have gone to Uzbekistan instead! This is too much plight for me - geez ... looks like Oklahoma!

Card #7

Traveler 3: You said you wanted to learn about other cultures - Come on, let's ask these local workers to take a picture of

us ...

Card #8

Traveler 4: Careful they might be armed! We're not in America you know, ... sheesh (*rolling eyes*)

Card #9

Traveler 1 (*Speaking to the leader of workers - flipping through language book and speaking slowly*): Excuse me people, please take our photograph.

*Narrator:* The traveler hands the camera to the leader of the workers who takes the camera, points it at him/herself, takes a picture then puts it in his/her pocket. The Traveler and the Worker then begin a dialogue beginning with card #10 while the travelers and workers nod along and follow some instructions from time to time.

Card #10

Worker 1: Who are you people and what are you people doing here?

Card #11

Traveler 1: (*speaking slowly and gesticulating to make him/herself "more understood"*): We come from other lands to see your country and how you live.

*Narrator:* The workers look confused and mumble to themselves ...

Card #12

Worker 1: We don't understand, how can you leave your country? Are you that rich?

Card #13

Traveler 1: No we are regular working people (*sweeping arms towards the group of travelers*) ...

*Narrator:* The group of travelers all start babbling on unison telling their job, hometown, name and then fall quiet. The workers look confused and pull at their long beards ...

Card #14

Traveler 1: We come to buy souvenirs, stay in hotels you can't afford and enrich your economy.

Card #15

Worker 1: Ahh now i see ... but we have nothing to sell, we used to make Matryoshka dolls (*pulling sample from a pocket*), - then the forests were cut and we had no wood and no work - But then Gashole came and built the machines and we had jobs.

Card #16

Traveler 1: But look what they are doing to your country and to your health! It's not worth it! There must be another way to live...

Card #17

Worker 1: You strangely decadent foreigners! You do not understand, we have no other choice, we wish we had cleaner more pleasant jobs but we must take the jobs the government brings for us ... or else ... we starve.

Card #18

Traveler 1: Why don't you rise up and resist! I tell you, I work for a government agency in America so I know a lot about how politics work. Together we'll march to the capital and let the politicians know, they must improve conditions or well, hmmm ... or else we'll picket and circulate a petition for sanctions or perhaps organize a big benefit concert with moody Irish pop stars!

Card #19

Worker 1: Well to be honest I don't know what you are talking about, but you have an honest face and if you think you can help us, we will trust you and together we will go to the Capital. (*turning to the workers*) Come all my repressed co-workers and together with our new comrades, we will go to the capital! By the way, does anyone know the way....?

*Narrator:* The Workers and Travelers gather together, link arms and march into the audience shouting slogans like "workers unite" and "we're off to the capital!"

**Act 2:**

*Narrator:* The unique protest march of oil workers and the well-intentioned western travelers attracts like-minded folk who join up along the way to the capital. So many people in fact that the government committee on such matters convenes a special session to hear their grievances. The leader of the Workers, accompanied by the leader of the Travelers stand

before the Honorable Prime Minister Yorhund Inma Pochet who presides over the hearing.

To the PM's right sit at least 3 oil company lawyers. On the left sit a couple of rather disinterested members of parliament who drink vodka and nod off from time to time. Outside, the group of workers can be heard cheering or booing his speeches. The Prime Minister begins the session by reading from card #1.

Card #1

PM: This meeting is underway! State your grievances. Quickly now!

Card #2

Worker 1: Me and others outside, we work in the oil fields. We work hard, but are paid little. When Gashole came, they promised to build schools and hospitals and said we would be paid enough to feed our families. But we are poorer, our water dirty, our farmlands spoiled and still we live in poverty. Our children must work too. We want the oil companies to keep their promises or leave our country!

Narrator: Outside the crowd cheers the impassioned speech. The lawyers huddle, shielding their mouths from sight, talking rapidly in hushed tones for a short period of time - then one lawyer, stands and speaks towards the PM.

Card #3

Lawyer 1: I move for an immediate and complete dismissal!

Card #4

PM: On what grounds?

Card #5

Lawyer 1: Well these people have absolutely no proof that we didn't build schools. I have in my briefcase photographs of schools we have built for the children of the workers. (*pulling a school building picture from a briefcase, holding it aloft*) We built the schools not because we have to, no ... because we care!

Narrator: The other lawyers stand and state similar arguments directed to the PM - again read in numerical order from small white cards.

Card #6

Lawyer 2: (*holding aloft a multi-colored pie chart*) I have here in my hands ... a pie chart proving (*dramatic pause*) ... proving that our refineries here are cleaner than in any of the other "shtans", including Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan!

Card #7

Lawyer 3: (*holding a topographical map of some sort*): Additionally, we have built thousands of miles of road. Yes we did require them to get to the rich oil fields we bought for nothing, and of course few private citizen have cars, but (*dramatic pause*) we build the roads for the people!

Card #8

Lawyer 1: Your honor, based on this overwhelming evidence, and the fact that we contribute thousands of rubles ensure your puppet government rubber stamps everything we need, including firing this ingrateful malcontent. from his job. I again call for permanent recess of this matter.

Narrator: The 2 Parliament members suddenly wake from their naps and excitedly read from their cards, starting with #9 ...

Card #9

Parliamentarian 1: Yes Recess! Sustained! motioned! adjourned! whatever! Yes, yes, fire him, there plenty more where he came from! Well it's recess! Someone bring me a sandwich, quickly!

Card #10

Parliamentarian 2: Yes quickly! More vodka and sausages, we are busy doing the work of the people! By the way, ... What's going on here? Who are these people? What are they doing here in my living room!

Narrator: The lawyers stand, slapping backs and shaking hands as they congratulate one other and walk out the parliamentary chambers. The PM quickly leaves the room, head hung low, the parliamentarians stumble out babbling loudly. The Worker and Traveler look around the emptying room, then at one another ... as though waiting for the other to speak.

Card #11

Worker 1: Well ... wise foreign counsellor friend, what do we do now?

Card #12

Traveler 1: I don't know, what do \*you\* do now? (*Looks at watch*) I got a plane to catch (*walks off leaving the worker*)

alone).

Narrator: *The forlorn worker, hearing the crowd outside booing and feeling very alone in the empty room walks over to the parliamentarians' desk, looks around, grabs the bottle of vodka and sneaks quickly out the back door.*

**the end**