

## Letter to World Citizens

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### A Tribute...With a Caveat

If I had to name one person who influenced me the most in my spiritual life, it would be Nataraja Guru, whose *Memorandum on World Government* we reprinted recently in its entirety.

But the person who first inspired my search for a peaceful world was Emery Reves.

In our last issue, we reminded you of some of the events of 1948, when the world citizenship movement sprang into life, beginning in Paris. But the preface to that story concerns my reading of Reves' *The Anatomy of Peace* shortly after its publication in 1945.

I had left the road tour of "Three to Make Ready" in Chicago, after playing straight to Ray Bolger in the Broadway production. It was my second show after "Let's Face It!" (1940-41) with Danny Kaye (whom I understudied), and I danced in the chorus. My only other "road show" had been as a B-17 bomber pilot in the Air Corps from '42 to '46.

The sole Broadway production casting in September 1946 was "Inside USA" with Bea Lillie. Every out-of-work actor in town auditioned for it, including me. From dozens of aspirants, I was hired as a second comedy lead by producer Horace Schmidlapp. But that summer, unemployed and still traumatized by the war and my part in the killing, as well as by my brother Bud's death at Salerno, I had read Reves' book.

I was both shocked and elated. Nothing in my academic background had provided this knowledge. "War or Peace 101" was not a subject at Carnegie Tech. For the first time, I *understood* my world, which, until then, had been "outside" the proscenium arches of the stages I played on.

I was so moved by Reves' insights that, on the third day of rehearsal, I informed Schmidlapp that I could not remain with the show. I had to work for "world peace through law."

"World peace through law!" he exclaimed. "But you're an actor, for gawdsakes! We're in rehearsal! We chose you from dozens of applicants. What the hell can you do for world peace?"

I just stared back.

The question was rhetorical. At that point I had no clear answers. But I did know that I wasn't simply a Broadway actor. The war had forced that realization on me. Whatever it was, I had a broader mission. Though it broke my heart to quit what turned out to be the hit show of the season, Reves' words had been so penetrating, so rational, so hopeful after my war experience, that I could see no alternative to doing my bit to save my world.

Crazy? You bet! But when I had read: "*The political framework of our world with its seventy or eighty sovereign nation-states is an insurmountable obstacle to free industrial progress, to individual liberty and to social security,*" Reves forced me to question my

own role as an exclusive member of one of those nation-states. My God, I was an accomplice to war! I had colluded in my own brother's death! Suddenly, I wanted out.

Remember the date: Fall 1946—one year after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. With the Berlin airlift underway, the political talk was of war with the latest enemy, the Soviet Union. The Cold War was heating up.

Upon demobilization, I had signed up for the Air Corps Reserves, mainly to obtain a commercial pilot's license gratis. Would I soon be called up to fly B-100s over Moscow with A-bombs? No way. If the world was about to blow up, what else could one do but try to prevent that ultimate catastrophe?

I devoured Reves' thesis about the feudal-state, the real meaning of sovereignty, and the need for world government. Here was a goal worthy enough to put everything else aside...for the moment.

*"Only if the people," he wrote, "in whom rests all sovereign power, delegate parts of their sovereignty to institutions created for and capable of dealing with specific problems, can we say that we have a democratic form of government."*

For me, this was a call for dramatic action: to exercise my own sovereignty as one human being on the global, not national, level and to claim the world citizenship Reves said we had *already!*

My mind raced. That claim of world citizenship was the key. It was the civic bond, both for humanity and to my fellow humans. You see, I took *The Anatomy of Peace* personally. Reves was writing to *me*, even *about* me. Wasn't I one of the *sovereign people*? And didn't I delegate my tiny bit of sovereignty to the fictional "United States of America"? So wasn't I actually colluding with the war game which all nation-states played?

As I pondered that imposed allegiance, I concluded that nation-state allegiance was, in the context of the Nuclear Age, a collective suicide pact!

That thought led directly to my renunciation of nationality on May 25, 1948. Incidentally, none of the many illustrious personages who so fervently supported *The Anatomy of Peace* followed my example.

What Reves failed to realize, however, was that world government could not be built on what existed. Indeed, the Founding Fathers in 1789 had to create an entirely new entity, not merely diddle with the old. Just so, a world government had to be created "outside" the obsolete 18th-century nation-state framework.

When thinking about world government, the error that most people make, including statesmen, is assuming that the nation-state system fills the entire political spectrum. In fact, the *global* political world is a giant vacuum waiting to be filled by the sovereignty of the community...which already exists!

Nataraja Guru understood this major point in his memorandum: *"The World Government has no territory other than the surface of the globe. It is not conceived as a rival to any existing government. It does not intend to duplicate any of their functions. Neither does it wish to be a parallel government, nor has it ambitions to be a super-state. On the other hand, it has no wish to occupy a second place among nation states. It has an absolute status of its own as understood in the light of the science of geo-dialectics already referred to."*

As you will read elsewhere in this newsletter, Emery Reves initially supported the world federalists. Later he discovered, to his dismay, that they were not only totally

ineffective, but did, in fact, reject his thesis of the sovereignty of the community. From then on, he followed his own path until his untimely death in 1981.

I met Emery Reves only once en passant on the lawn of his and Wendy Reves' enchanting villa on the Cote d'Azur in the late '50s. The French government had already tried to expel me, but the Italian government returned me to France. When Parisian officials gave me 10 days to get out, I claimed "asylum" on the "international line" in the middle of the bridge at Menton, between the Italian and French border posts. The furious French gendarmes hustled me back to France, where I was placed under the personal protection of the Prefect of the Haute Maritime.

Several weeks later, I was advised by a friend in the Prefecture at Nice that the government was about to arrest and intern me at an infamous refugee camp in the Cantal. "He must be silenced, this 'soi-disant citoyen du monde!'"

I figured it was time to meet my political guru, residing only miles away, and to seek his advice.

After cordial greetings on the spacious lawn of La Pausa, I asked Reves what I should do. "Start a world citizen political party," he replied. "That is the way to gain power."

I had already founded the International Registry of World Citizens in 1949. "Mundialization" of towns and cities was growing throughout the world. Our world citizen government had been declared in 1953 from Ellsworth, Maine. The World Service Authority had issued its first World Passports in 1954. In short, we were operating our sovereignty globally, already exercising sovereign power.

I had thought that Reves knew all this and had followed our developments from 1948 on. Indeed, Wendy Reves told me recently that they had followed my career through Cord Meyer, then the president of the United World Federalists.

So his suggestion perplexed me. Weren't we practicing what he himself advocated? What more could a political party do? Besides, it would entail enormous expense and organization. Wasn't such a strategy contrary to Reves' own insistence that world government itself was the "first step"?

I don't know what I expected from Emery Reves, my political "guru," but his advice seemed somehow inconsistent with our present path. Rather dispirited, I thanked him and left.

But the lesson was learned, if bitter-sweet. Follow your own destiny. Don't ask others, even your guru, what to "do."

To paraphrase the popular song, "*We did it our way.*" But Emery Reves, our fellow world citizen, with our profound gratitude, illuminated the global path.

*(Editor's note: In order to escape being sent to a French refugee camp, Davis left France in a rubber boat one night, rowing to the Italian side of the Mediterranean coast. Making his way to the Island of Capri, he stayed with Violet Rawnsley until being picked up by the Italian immigration police. He was then sent to the refugee camp, Frascati, for two months and was finally shipped back to the United States.)*