



Robin's Nest

A World Citizen Inspired by the Stars: Stephan Mogle-Stadel

By Robin Lloyd

August is the month to watch the night sky. The annual Perseid meteor showers are sending their celestial debris streaking through our atmosphere. The heavens were cloudy two of the three evenings I looked; but even a brief time star gazing causes wonder and questions.

A German man visited Burlington recently to interview world citizen Garry Davis. When I interviewed Stephen Mogle-Stadel, author of a biography of the second Secretary-General of the UN, Dag Hammarskjöld, and asked him what set his life on its unique trajectory, he said it was the gift to him of a telescope: “As a child of 8 or 9, I got a present from my parents of a telescope. I would go out to a field, and from watching the stars I got an impression of how big the universe is, and how small minded a lot of people down on earth are, battling over petty things. Immanuel Kant had the same observation...if you look upon the stars it wakes something up in you and you develop a cosmopolitan mind...so I had this early experience, being alone in the night with the stars...”

Another youthful experience showed his propensity to take life seriously. “When I was 16, I visited together with my school class the Dachau Concentration Camp. I experienced some guys playing soccer with a tin can, and I interrupted them, and took away their tin. I didn't think about it, I just did it... Dachau is a special place, where so many people were killed, and to just have fun and kick around a tin... It is not enough to guide students to such places, if you don't change your mind, and at that time I thought, I am a citizen of the world, and I must do something as a consequence of Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Dachau.”

In 1989, at the age of 19, Stephan refused military service, claiming he was a Citizen of the World. In West Germany,

before the fall of the Berlin wall and reunification, this was a very difficult position to take. “Military service was obligatory,” he said. “Everyone had to go or they had to have a good reason; if you were a member of the communist party, or of a Christian church, you might get out, but I said I was a citizen of the world, and as such I said I could not serve in a



Garry Davis and Stephan Mogle-Stadel

national army.” He considered patriotism as a form of national paranoia. He had done a psychoanalytic review of military service, and found that if you bring young men too early into such a system, before they have time to develop themselves, it's not good for their psychological development.

Ultimately “they wrote me back telling me that I should find another argument, and that I had four weeks to reply otherwise they must refuse my request. This was the first time that a German person said they would not serve because they were a World Citizen.” It happened that Stephan, by then a journalist, was traveling to NYC, doing research at the UN on Dag Hammarskjöld...” and this magic name of

D.H. opened some doors for me, so I had the chance to rewrite my application on UN paper, and send it from the UN fax. ... {The German draft board} must have thought, ‘before this guy makes any more turmoil, we'll let him go through’ ... I wanted to do my civil service for humanity and of course at that time the only place was at the UN.”

I asked him why he came to Burlington to interview Garry Davis.

“After claiming World Citizenship,” he explained, “I discovered there was a movement, the German World Federalists. They had nearly died out from age, but one of the members contacted me and brought me to a conference of Federalists, and I met Peter Ustinov. I learned about Garry and I got a World Citizen passport in 1993. I started an organization in Germany, working with governmental officials trying to strengthen and reform the UN.”

As many Vermonters know, Garry Davis, 87, who has lived in the Burlington area since 1991, was a bomber pilot in World War II. Bombing cities led him to decide, after the war, that nations are the cause of war. He entered the American Embassy in Paris in May of 1948 and renounced his American citizenship. Emerging as a stateless person, he declared himself a citizen of the world. The peoples of the world, exhausted by war, embraced him as ‘le petit soldat américain’ and clamored to sign up for his Registry of World Citizens.

In November of '48, he caused a furor at the newly formed United Nations, which was meeting then in Paris. He interrupted one of their sessions by shouting from the balcony “I interrupt you in the name of the people...” He was hustled off by four security guards, but his friend and co-conspirator, Robert Sarazac, continued his words:

“I interrupt you in the name of the people of the world not represented here. Though my words may be unheeded, our common need for world law and order can no longer be disregarded.

We, the people, want the peace which only a world government can give.

The sovereign states you represent divide us and lead us to the abyss of Total War.

I call upon you to no longer deceive us by this illusion of political authority.

I call upon you to convene forthwith a World Constituent Assembly to raise the standard around which all men can gather, the standard of true peace, of One Government for One World.

And if you fail us in this...stand aside. For a People's World Assembly will arise from our own ranks to create such a government. We can be served by nothing less. "


I asked Stephan to explain why he thought that this action unblocked resistance in the UN to the passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights the following month.

"If you look at the discussion in the General Assembly at that time," Stephan answered, "there was no public involvement, but due to Garry's intervention, attention was drawn to the Universal Declaration, and to the 30 articles {championed by Eleanor Roosevelt}. He made so much trouble in the press that the light of the public was drawn to the issue". A week before the UDHR was to be voted on in the UN General Assembly, 20,000 people gathered in the Velodrome d'Hiver to hear Garry's challenge to the UN.

The Universal Declaration was adopted by the General Assembly on 10 December 1948 by a vote of 48 in favor, 0 against, with 8 abstentions.

A few days later, Eleanor Roosevelt wrote that the UN is not set up to make peace – "that's what governments are supposed to do among themselves". But, she added, "How very much better it would be if Mr. Davis would set up his own governmental organization and start then and there a worldwide international government. All who would join him

would learn that they have no nationality and, therefore, not being bothered by any special interest in any one country everyone would develop what he believes to be a completely cooperative feeling among all peoples and a willingness to accept any laws passed by this super government."

That's what Garry did, and Stephan is a member of it, carrying the message of individual sovereignty and world law to a younger generation. 

PJC Classified

Peace & Justice Center is looking for assistance as we migrate our website from FrontPage to Dreamweaver. Are you skilled in the fine art of file structure and know the ins and outs of these two programs? If so and you would like to make an in-kind donation of your services we would like to talk to you. Our timeline for this project is Sept/Oct.

Please contact Anise Richey at 863-2345 x6 or arichey@pjcv.org.

CALENDAR

September 2009

[9] Wednesday

• 6-8pm Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) meeting at the Peace & Justice Center. Info: 372-6117.

• 6pm Monthly Review Press presents a Book Party & Discussion with Steve Early, author of *Embedded with Organized Labor: Journalistic Reflections on the Class War at Home*. 16 Wilson St, Burlington (between Mansfield and N. Prospect St). Co-sponsored by: Will Miller Social Justice Lecture Series, Labor Notes, CWA Local 1400, VT Workers Center?JWJ, Peace & Justice Center, United Academics-AFT/AAUP, and Burlington ISO. 363-1362.

[14] Monday

• 7pm DEBATE: Ending Israel's Occupation of Palestinian Territories: Non-violent Options. International Commons, St. Michael's College.

[16] Wednesday

• 7pm Fr Roy Bourgeois has been working to close the School of Americas. The school trains Latin American soldiers at Fort Benning Ga. He will give a talk at the 1st Unitarian Universalist Society, 152 Pearl St, Burlington VT.

Free admission. web site: soaw.org. Contact Richard Kemp 802 862 4418.

[21] Monday

• 6-8pm Vermonters for a Just Peace in Palestine/Israel meeting at PJC.

October 2009

[29] Thursday

• John Bellamy Foster. Will Miller Social Justice Lecture Series. More details, next issue.