

The Man Who Saved the World



The Man Who Saved the World is a feature documentary film which premiered at Woodstock in October 2014 winning the Best Narrative Feature Award.

It tells the true story of Lieutenant Colonel Stanislav Petrov of the Soviet Air Defence Forces. For a few crucial minutes on 26 September 1983 Petrov held the fate of the world in his hands.

Petrov was on duty at a Soviet nuclear early warning centre when the computers warned five American nuclear missiles were heading towards the Soviet Union.

Under the doctrine of 'Launch-on-warning', he had less than 6 minutes to confirm and report the incoming attack, after which retaliatory missiles would most likely be fired at the US before the incoming missiles hit their Russian targets.

Instead, Petrov sensed that something was wrong. He broke protocol and reported to his superiors that it was a false alarm, despite satellite confirmation of an incoming attack.

In fact Petrov was correct and his decision saved the world from a nuclear holocaust.

The movie recreates the tense moments in 1983, and then follows Petrov as he travels to the US three decades later, where he is finally acknowledged for his actions. On his visit he is greeted by Walter Cronkite as "the man who saved the world" and meets Robert de Niro, Matt Damon and his hero Kevin Costner (who also

starred in the movie 'Thirteen Days' about the Cuban Missile Crisis, directed by New Zealander Roger Donaldson).

The film shows how precarious our survival is in a world where over 1600 missiles are kept on high alert. A false warning, a technical malfunction, a terrorist act or cyber warfare could take the world from the brink into a holocaust in which human survival itself could be threatened.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Adviser to Jimmy Carter from 1977 to 1981, recalls a similar episode in which a US system malfunction warned of a Soviet attack on the US. Brzezinski was at the point of advising a counter-attack to the President when advice came that it was also a false alarm.

Despite widespread support for New Zealand initiatives at the UN to take nuclear weapons off high alert, the nuclear powers have failed to act to do so.

This movie is a reminder and a wake-up call that complacency about the dangers of nuclear weapons could destroy the world.

This must-see film will screen for the first time in New Zealand in Auckland and Wellington in conjunction with the International Day for Peace and the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

New Zealand Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament will show the film at the Beehive Theatre on Tuesday 22 September from 6.00pm to 8.00pm.

You are welcome to attend.

Phil Goff
Chair, PNND (New Zealand)