

“The next move is ours: the gates of the technocratic prison will open...as soon as we choose to walk out”/ L.Mumford

Stanislav Petrov — World Hero

He averted a catastrophe that could have shaken the foundation of the Earth for many centuries to come — and the future of humanity forever . . .

In 1983 in Russia, there was a man who would have been considered an enemy by the people of America. But as it turned out, he would become for them and for the world an unknown hero — perhaps the greatest hero of all time. Because of military secrecy, and political and international differences, most of the world has not heard of this man. He is Stanislav Petrov. The extraordinary incident leading to his heroism occurred near Moscow, in the former Soviet Union, just past midnight, Sept. 26, 1983. Because of time-zone differences, it was still Sept. 25 in America, a Sunday afternoon. During the Cold War at this time, the United States and the Soviet Union were bitter adversaries. These two world powers did not trust each other, and this distrust led to a dangerous consequence: They built thousands of nuclear weapons to be used against each other if a war should ever break out between them. If there ever were such a war, these nations would very likely devastate each other and much of the world many times over, resulting in the deaths of perhaps hundreds of millions of people.

It was Lieutenant Colonel Stanislav Petrov’s duty to use computers and satellites to warn the Soviet Union if there were ever a nuclear missile attack by the United States. In the event of such an attack, the Soviet Union’s strategy was to launch an immediate all-out nuclear weapons counterattack against the United States.

On this particular day, something went wrong. Suddenly the computer alarms sounded, warning that an American missile was heading toward the Soviet Union. Lt. Col. Petrov reasoned that a computer error had occurred, since the United States was not likely to launch just one missile if it were attacking the Soviet Union — it would launch many. Besides, there had been questions in the past about the reliability of the satellite system being used. So he dismissed the warning as a false alarm, concluding that no missile had actually been launched by the United States.

But then, just a short time later, the situation turned very serious. Now the computer system was indicating a second missile had been launched by the United States and was approaching the Soviet Union. Then it showed a third missile being launched, and then a fourth and a fifth. The sound of the alarms was deafening. In front of Lt. Col. Petrov the word “Start” was flashing in bright lettering, presumably the instruction indicating the Soviet Union must begin launching a massive counterstrike against the United States.

Even though Lt. Col. Petrov had a gnawing feeling the computer system was wrong, he had no way of knowing for sure. He had nothing else to go by. The Soviet Union’s land radar was not capable of detecting any missiles beyond the horizon, information that by then would be too late to be useful. And worse, he had only a few minutes to decide what to tell the Soviet leadership. He made his final decision: He would trust his intuition and declare it a false alarm. If he were wrong, he realized nuclear missiles from the United States would soon begin raining down on the Soviet Union. He waited. The minutes and seconds passed. Everything remained quiet — no missiles and no destruction. His decision had been right. Stanislav Petrov had prevented a worldwide nuclear war. He was a hero. Those around him congratulated him for his superb judgment. But he had disobeyed military procedure by defying the computer warnings. And because of this, he later underwent intense questioning by his superiors about his actions during this nerve-racking ordeal. Perhaps because he had ignored the warnings, he was no longer considered a reliable military officer. Presumably in the military it is understood that orders and procedures are to be carried out unflinchingly, without question. In the end, the Soviet military did not reward or honor Stanislav Petrov for his actions. It did not punish him either. But his once promising military career had come to an end. He was reassigned to a less sensitive position and soon was retired from the military. He went on to live his life in Russia as a pensioner. Because of Stanislav Petrov’s actions that day in 1983, the Earth was spared what could have become the most devastating tragedy in the history of humanity. Stanislav Petrov has said he does not regard himself as a hero for what he did that day. But in terms of the incalculable number of lives saved, and the overall health of the planet Earth, he undeniably is one of the greatest heroes of all time. There is yet something else unsettling about this incident. Stanislav Petrov was not originally scheduled to be on duty that night. Had he not been there, it is possible a different commanding officer would not have questioned the computer alarms, tragically leading the world into a nuclear holocaust. As it turned out, this incident ended fortunately for America and for the world. But unfortunately for Stanislav Petrov, it ruined his career and his health, and it deprived him of his peace of mind. This is one debt the world will never be able to repay.

*“There is this natural safety mechanism—call it a violence immune system—that is present in human beings. The average human being is profoundly uninterested in killing others and the military has had to confront this for millennia.” / D. Grossman **

*From Jerry Brown’s book about 18 interviews taken by him in his radio hour “We the people”, the book is titled “Dialogues” and its chapter on Grossman is titled **“The Myth of a Killing Instinct”**.

A Soldier’s Story

Vietnam vet George Mizo and his mission to help the victims of war

At the International Committee meeting in Hanoi last week, the Veterans Association of Vietnam announced that there are now 120 children living at the Friendship Village. Also, last week, Micheele Mason, Jeff Schutts, the Hatfield Group and some other local Vancouver activists created the Canadian non-profit for the Vietnam Friendship Village Project and have joined the International Committee to try and raise this year’s operating costs at the village. For more information about about the Vietnam Friendship Village Project Canada visit the Cypress Park Productions Inc. web site at www.cypress-park.ca.

In 1967, an American soldier named George Mizo went off to fight in Vietnam. More than two decades later, he embarked on a new mission: to undo some of the harm caused by his country’s war in Southeast Asia. The Friendship Village, a documentary making its world premiere on VisionTV Thursday, Nov. 14 at 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. ET, tells the story of Mizo’s journey from war hero to peace activist. The hour-long film focuses on his efforts to help found a village for Vietnamese children and adults suffering from illnesses related to Agent Orange. The son of a Native American father, George Mizo grew up believing the best of his country, and felt duty-bound to enlist for service in Vietnam. He would later be decorated for his valour on the front lines. But Mizo’s experiences also caused him to question his assumptions. “We were killing the very people and destroying the very country I thought we were coming over to protect,” he told Vancouver filmmaker Michelle Mason. Badly wounded at Que Son in January 1968, Mizo discovered later that his entire platoon had been wiped out in combat. He returned home filled with anger, which he poured into protest against the war. As the years passed, his commitment to the peace movement increased. In the 1980s, he joined with other Vietnam veterans in speaking out against U.S. policy in Central America. The seeds of the Friendship Village project were planted soon after. During the war, American forces sprayed more than 70 million litres of the defoliant Agent Orange on the jungles of southern Vietnam. Today, vast areas remain contaminated with dioxin, a component of the herbicide. The Vietnamese believe this toxic compound to be responsible for more than a million birth defects. (A Vancouver firm, Hatfield Consultants, is heavily involved in researching the impact of Agent Orange in Vietnam.) In 1992, Mizo and a group of other veterans from the U.S., Vietnam, Australia, France, Germany, Great Britain and Japan began work on the Friendship Village, a residential facility for victims of Agent Orange. Among his colleagues on the project: Sr. Lt-General Tran Van Quang, the same man who planned and led the Vietnamese assault at Que Son.

A place of reconciliation and healing, Friendship Village now serves more than 70 residents. Fundraising for new construction, rehabilitation equipment and ongoing care continues. As Mizo says in the film, this remarkable project is proof that “we can make a difference – each and every one of us.”

George Mizo died in March of this year. He was 56.

Another soldier’s story: **Alexandros Panagoulis’** (from his oration in court martial)

“...In one sense I was happy my bomb missed his car by one meter. I’m not a killer, I’m a fighter. And to fight against a junta doesn’t mean to kill its leader who is just a puppet buffoon played by foreign interests, nor to kill some of its quite replaceable policemen or soldiers, whom I would not stand the remorse to kill. To fight a junta means to disarm it, and disarming it means that a great number of soldiers will disobey their orders, and somebody telling them to do so means he proves to them that it is humanly possible to stand the consequences... I deserted your army to serve my country, as I do serve it everyday in the torture chamber; you deserted your country by not deserting an army that receives orders against its country and its people. Alas to a nation not giving birth to a tyrannicide when giving birth to a tyrant.”

More soldiers’ stories:

Google: Israel: "Refuseniks" Say They Won't Attack Civilians IRIN News 09 August 2006

“AWOL War Resister Sergeant to Turn Himself in Today by David Swanson AfterDowningStreet.org 11 August 2006”

Regaining My Humanity . Still another soldier's story: **Camilo Mejia's**

March 2004, 28-year-old Sgt. Camilo Mejia turned himself in to the U.S. military and filed an application for conscientious objector status. On May 21, he was sentenced to one year in prison for refusing to return to fight in Iraq. He was released from prison on Feb. 15, 2005.

I was deployed to Iraq in April 2003 and returned home for a two-week leave in October. Going home gave me the opportunity to put my thoughts in order and to listen to what my conscience had to say. People would ask me about my war experiences and answering them took me back to all the horrors – the firefights, the ambushes, the time I saw a young Iraqi dragged by his shoulders through a pool of his own blood or an innocent man decapitated by our machine-gun fire. The time I saw a soldier broken down inside because he killed a child, or an old man on his knees, crying with his arms raised to the sky, perhaps asking God why we had taken the lifeless body of his son.

I thought of the suffering of a people whose country was in ruins and who were further humiliated by the raids, patrols and curfews of an occupying army.

And I realized that none of the reasons we were told about why we were in Iraq turned out to be true. There were no weapons of mass destruction. There was no link between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda. We weren't helping the Iraqi people and the Iraqi people didn't want us there. We weren't preventing terrorism or making Americans safer. I couldn't find a single good reason for having been there, for having shot at people and been shot at.

Coming home gave me the clarity to see the line between military duty and moral obligation. I realized that I was part of a war that I believed was immoral and criminal, a war of aggression, a war of imperial domination. I realized that acting upon my principles became incompatible with my role in the military, and I decided that I could not return to Iraq.

By putting my weapon down, I chose to reassert myself as a human being. I have not deserted the military nor been disloyal to the men and women of the military. I have not been disloyal to a country. I have only been loyal to my principles.

When I turned myself in, with all my fears and doubts, it did it not only for myself. I did it for the people of Iraq, even for those who fired upon me – they were just on the other side of a battleground where war itself was the only enemy. I did it for the Iraqi children, who are victims of mines and depleted uranium. I did it for the thousands of unknown civilians killed in war. My time in prison is a small price compared to the price Iraqis and Americans have paid with their lives. Mine is a small price compared to the price humanity has paid for war.

Many have called me a coward, others have called me a hero. I believe I can be found somewhere in the middle. To those who have called me a hero, I say that I don't believe in heroes, but I believe that ordinary people can do extraordinary things.

To those who have called me a coward I say that they are wrong, and that without knowing it, they are also right. They are wrong when they think that I left the war for fear of being killed. I admit that fear was there, but there was also the fear of killing innocent people, the fear of putting myself in a position where to survive means to kill, there was the fear of losing my soul in the process of saving my body, the fear of losing myself to my daughter, to the people who love me, to the man I used to be, the man I wanted to be. I was afraid of waking up one morning to realize my humanity had abandoned me.

I say without any pride that I did my job as a soldier. I commanded an infantry squad in combat and we never failed to accomplish our mission. But those who called me a coward, without knowing it, are also right. I was a coward not for leaving the war, but for having been a part of it in the first place. Refusing and resisting this war was my moral duty, a moral duty that called me to take a principled action. I failed to fulfill my moral duty as a human being and instead I chose to fulfill my duty as a soldier. All because I was afraid. I was terrified; I did not want to stand up to the government and the army – I was afraid of punishment and humiliation. I went to war because at the moment I was a coward, and for that I apologize to my soldiers for not being the type of leader I should have been.

I also apologize to the Iraqi people. To them I say I am sorry for the curfews, for the raids, for the killings. May they find it in their hearts to forgive me.

One of the reasons I did not refuse the war from the beginning was that I was afraid of losing my freedom. Today, as I sit behind bars I realize that there are many types of freedom, and that in spite of my confinement I remain free in many important ways. What good is freedom if we are afraid to follow our conscience? What good is freedom if we are not able to live with our own actions? I am confined to a prison but I feel, today more than ever, connected to all humanity. Behind these bars I sit a free man because I listened to a higher power, the voice of my conscience.

“...a point made in Steiner’s book is that as it finally turned out the act of establishing a geographic Israel and not continuing its u-topic existence in the “abstract city” sense (“etherialized city” as Mumford would call it) in which it had survived spiritually, culturally, humanly for millennia and had made these same aspects of its God (plus His abstractness) live and propagate among the other civilizations it came into contact with, and was both loved and hated by them for that, and was in closer proximity to its God through that love and that hate too, OK, it seems that the way this etherealized city and etherialized historical/metaphysical function tried to materialize in geography, even with the good reason of avoiding another holocaust, most probably pulverized all it had ever stood for and terminated whatever it still had to offer; this is no attitude like “a good Jew is a dead or crippled martyr Jew or a poor little protection needing Jew etc”. It is an insight which applies equally and even more precisely in the analysis of how the etherealized city of early Christians became a city of sadists, inquisitors, crusaders, invaders, slave traders, conquistadores, holocaust accomplices, pious Mafiosi and pious nukers and Islamophobics when the celestial City of Early Christians materialized geographically, politically, institutionally etc”

Greek book review (by C. Yiannaras) of a book by Steiner

Let’s now remember that it was a Jewish wise man whose utopic ideas (literally u-topic, in the sense we’ve just seen), in a time he called “eclipse of God”, were speaking of helpers of God and not of fatalists saying “God help us”. Helpers of God do exist in today’s Israel, let’s see some not so very much older news:

1. Google: Gush Shalom activist Uri Avnery to act as human shield for Arafat

by Gush Shalom • *Monday September 15, 2003 at 11:46 PM*

Even Israelis oppose this insanity

2:Naboth had a Vineyard

Had they been there last Saturday at sunset, most Israelis would not have believed their eyes

In the middle of Havarah, a small village south of Nablus, 63 Israelis, men and women, young and old, were standing together with dozens of Palestinian villagers. Jews and Arabs talked together, drank juice offered by the hosts, exchanged addresses and phone numbers. The local children were wearing stickers brought by the guests, showing the flags of Israel and Palestine. Nobody bore arms.

All of them looked happy, and with reason: they had just finished a hard day’s work at olive picking. They had been together under the trees. They were together when the settlers opened fire.

All this happened deep inside Palestinian territory, after two years of violent confrontation. A feast of Israeli-Palestinian fraternization in the middle of the bloody attacks. A human experience. A political act. A symbolic event. Since biblical times the olive tree has been the symbol of this country. It has sustained the peasants for many generations - Canaanites, Israelites, Arabs. Throughout the year, the peasant works in the grove that has been handed down from father to son, treats the trees, cleans the ground. During the few weeks of harvest, the whole family picks the olives - men and women, old people and children. The olives must be picked in time and brought to the olive press, where the golden liquid is extracted - olive oil. These are days of rejoicing. A whole family can live now on ten olive trees. Without them, they cannot exist. The harsher the occupation becomes, the more it prevents movement and denies livelihood, the more the villagers become dependent on the olive trees. Therefore the actions of the settlers are so dastardly. They try to prevent the harvesting, to steal the fruit or to burn the groves. Their actions remind one of one of the wickedest deeds described in the Bible, for eternal shame: the story of Naboth’s vineyard (1 Kings 21.):

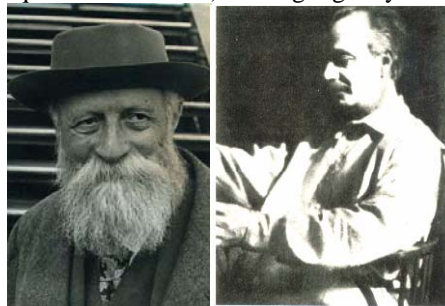
“Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house, and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it, or, if it seems good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money. And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee...” The rest of the story is well known: Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, produced false witnesses, Naboth was stoned to death, Ahab got the vineyard. In the end, the dogs licked the blood of both Ahab and Jezebel. But compared to today’s settlers, the wicked Jezebel was a model of righteousness. The settlers take possession of the villagers’ olive groves without even offering payment or alternatives. They just shoot. One Palestinian boy was shot and killed by them while picking olives, hundreds of others were driven out. Almost every Palestinian village has olive groves that border on some settlement or “outpost”, and that is now controlled by the settlers. When the owners approach to clean the ground or pick the olives, the settlers shoot at them “in coordination with the army”. The simple

pretext: when the villagers pick olives near a settlement, they can see what happens there and threaten it. A monstrous perversion, indeed: putting a settlement in the middle of a dense population of Palestinians and forbidding them to work their land, because it is close to the settlement. In some cases the settlers were not satisfied with shooting, but invaded the groves physically, drove away the villagers and stole the olives they had picked. The prophets of Israel would have been shocked. Daylight robbery. And the army keeps silent. The intentions of the settlers are more evil than those of Ahab and Jezebel. They want to turn the life of the villagers into hell, in order to force them to leave. That is what's called "voluntary transfer", or, in simple language, ethnic cleansing. For decent Israelis, the conclusion is clear: they get up to help the villagers to pick the olives, before they rot on the trees or are stolen. They form a "human shield" against the settlers. During the last few weeks, hundreds of Israelis have done just that.

Last Saturday, 260 Israelis answered the calls of the various peace organizations (Gush Shalom, Ta'ayush, The Women's Coalition, a sector of Peace Now and others.) They were divided between the villages that were in the greatest danger. My lot was to come to Havarah, a village lying in a valley between two high mountains. Its olive groves are dispersed on the steep slopes of the mountains, which are covered with rocks and stinging bushes. It was quite an effort just to get there. Here and there somebody fell down and was scratched. But all arrived. Around dozens of trees, groups of pickers, Israelis and Palestinians, started to work. The owners of the trees took advantage of the presence of the Israelis and worked quickly. Going against accepted practice, they hit the branches with sticks in order to get the fruit to fall on the green plastic sheets that were spread on the ground. Bad for the tree, but much quicker. Time was short.

Everybody was working feverishly, holding the fruit-laden branches and filling buckets and sacks or gathering from the ground. Each olive was precious. Sportsmen and sportswomen climbed into the trees, filling hats and bags. The groups that reached the top of the mountain found themselves opposite the settlers of Yitzhar, a well-known nest of fanatics, dressed in their Sabbath clothes - black trousers, white shirts - and holding their guns. They threatened the pickers, shot into the air and at the ground (one of the Israeli pickers was hit by a clump of earth). The shots echoed between the mountains. Forty minutes later the soldiers appeared, and, after hugging the settlers, demanded that the pickers leave the area. They explained that the settlers were right when they opened fire, because the pickers were endangering the settlement. The pickers continued their work obstinately, defended by the Israeli "human shield". But gradually they were pushed down the slope, closely followed by the settlers, with the soldiers in between. In the other groves, the work continued without interruption. While it was going on, cigarettes were exchanged, conversations started, first haltingly, than more vividly, in spite of language difficulties. Some of the villagers spoke Hebrew and told about the places in Tel-Aviv where they had worked.

Before darkness fell, the sheets were gathered and folded, people put the heavy, full sacks on their shoulders or on donkeys, and started the descent from the steep slopes, from terrace to terrace. The local boys leapt easily, the elderly and the guests moved more cautiously, holding on to bushes and supporting each other. Many happy people were there. Those who had faced down the hooligans were happy because they had not fled. The Israeli pickers were happy because they had combined a political demonstration with a useful act. The Palestinians were happy because they had saved at least part of their harvest. They were carrying the heavy bags on their shoulders. At the foot of the mountain, the sacks were put on donkeys and ancient cars that looked as if they were about to fall apart at any moment. In the end, an emotional farewell: hundreds of Palestinians, men, women and children, waved enthusiastically at the departing Israelis, in the village square, the alleys and from the windows - a whole village. The happy earnings of a day's work. Upshot comment: "I'll get by with a little help from my friends...". Some God's helpers a day keep new Ahabs away (Keeps away new Pequot infamies too!). And google by all means the (three) refs of p.2&p.4



Buber versus Gibran
The non-clash of civilizations

Addendum of July 26 2008:

Besides being an addition to the list of both simple and inspired, and sometimes utmostly hard to implement, practical proposals we saw in this file, the sequel is also a continuation of the last few lines of the previous file, on the nature and core of relevance that higher education really has. It will be more illuminating if we also see how we were led to the pages that will follow. We were reading, first thing in the morning, Chomsky's interview to Vincent Navarro, starting like:

Noam Chomsky Interviewed by Vincent Navarro

Source: [Progressive Summer University of Catalonia \(UPEC\)](#)
[Noam Chomsky's ZSpace Page](#)
[Join ZSpace](#)

Interviewed by Vincent Navarro. at M.I.T., Cambridge, Massachusetts, on May 13, 2008. Vincent Navarro is Professor of Public Policy at the Pompeu Fabra University, and The Johns Hopkins University.

Vincent Navarro: Thank you so much for welcoming us here.

Noam Chomsky: Delighted to have a chance to talk to you.

VN: We are here on behalf of the Summer Progressive University of Catalonia. As I told you before the interview, the University's intention is to recover the history of Catalonia, recalling the time during the thirties when workers and academics would get together in the summer to discuss matters of interest to them. This was, of course, forbidden during the Franco dictatorship. When the left-wing parties regained the government of Catalonia in 2003, they renewed this commitment to restarting the Summer Progressive University. We would have liked you to give the inaugural address for this reopening. I'm sorry you couldn't make it. We hope you will come to visit us there some day.

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The rest, as well as our opinions and feelings about it, both regarding Chomsky and regarding Navarro, the reader can find in the 12th, and final, file of the present abstract or in this file too, but later; now let's concentrate on the last paragraph: the project of having workers and university teachers getting together to discuss problems of interest, besides sounding as simple as "Columbus' egg", seems like something belonging to either a future we dream of or a past so sunken that we're not sure it's historical and not mythical even when it's recent; I tried to google about it but all key-words I tried sent me back to the interview; I tried to find Navarro's address and at least that googling sent me to articles of his (a sample I added at the end of file 9 where it belonged. I also added there some titles to google for); next day I had the so very brilliant idea that the first blue letters of the article would lead me somewhere by just clicking on them and they did: at least I quickly found an e-address for comments to Navarro, and besides adding my thanks to the so many thanks to him he sure had received for taking the best interview of Chomsky EVER, I also thanked him—just in case he had played a role in this "get-together-of-workers-and-university-professors-summer-school"—for existing now and not in the future or past. And I asked him if he could send me information about that school. How it was before Franco, how it was revived, with what aims, who gave the inaugural address when Chomsky couldn't, what was its content, what kinds of people participate in its discussions, with what results yet, etc etc etc. If he answers I'll include the information in the sequel, if not I'll leave this page here and if a reader can help me add that sequel I, and other readers too, would be much obliged...