Wortley Hall

War – and Peace

May 2014

Civil Resistance Can Change the World

Notes based on, and quoting, a review feature in the Morning Star, February 17th 2014 by Ian Sinclair (author of *The March that Shook Blair: An Oral History of 15 February 2003*, published by Peace News Press.

1. "I've been reviewing books for over 8 years and feel I've just finished one of the most important books I've ever read. The book is: ***Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict***, jointly authored by Erica Chenoweth, an assistant professor of government at Wesleyan University and Maria J Stephen, a strategic planner with the US State Department."

2. "Analysing 323 examples of resistance campaigns and rebellion from 1900 to 2006 the authors conclude that non-violent campaigns have been twice as successful as violent campaigns in achieving their objectives. They contend that this difference is down to non-violent campaigns being more likely to attract mass support, noting 'the moral, physical, informational and commitment barriers are much lower for non-violent resistance than for violent insurgency'."

3. "Moreover, they find that non-violent resistance campaigns are more likely to lead to democratic forms of government than violent campaigns."

4. Non-violent resistance has been hidden from history. We can all rattle off the names and battles in.. history, but how many of us know about how peaceful demonstrations overthrew the Guatamalian dictator, General Ubico in 1944? Or how mass protests overthrew Ferdinand Marcos in the Phillipines in 1986?

5. "According to Chenoweth and Stephan the evidence they have collected 'rejects the claim that there are some types of states against which only violence will work'... The Iranian government overthrown in 1979 (by a campaign of civil resistance) had the worst human rights record of any country in the world, according to Amnesty International in 1976. Not harsh enough for you? How about East Timor where Amnesty .. reported Indonesian troops had killed 200,000 people between their 1975 invasion and 1999 – approximately one-third of the total population of East Timor. Despite this mass murder a largely non-violent movement eventually managed to eject the Indonesian forces and declared independence in 2002".

6. "Another tick in the 'pro' column for non-violent resistance is the fact that it generally leads to a much smaller death toll – on all sides of a conflict".

7. "Of course, non-violent resistance is not a magic wand and does not guarantee success. However, the hard evidence shows it generally has the strategic edge over violent resistance". Sinclair does not mention Nelson Mandela - we can discuss the anti-apartheid movement and its relevance in this context maybe…

8. "Chenoweth and Stephan's findings raise profound questions for those living under dictatorships and Western citizens considering how best to help those resisting oppression."