

popular opinion, not all conservationists are middle-class.

Watson concludes by attempting to find commonalities in an attempt at reconciliation between the two antagonists.

This is a very readable and enjoyable book with a wealth of empirical detail. Its major strength is its different focus. Instead of the mainstream interpretation of the conservationists up against the 'baddies' (the Mill owners, Forestry, and the Government), a different interpretation is presented with the 'greenies' portrayed as slick political operators, with money and access to power. It is the mill worker in this story who has his back up against the wall – unsophisticated, and just trying to feed mouths. After all 'that's two years work to me mate, you know' (104).

## Civil Resistance

By Michael Randle

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Reviewed by Brian Martin

What Michael Randle calls "civil resistance" is familiar to everyone as rallies, boycotts, strikes, sit-ins and other forms of collective nonviolent action. It is "resistance" against government power. Some of the dramatic examples in recent decades include the use of "people power" – hundreds of thousands of people in the street – in the Philippines to topple the Marcos dictatorship in 1986, the collapse of Eastern European communist dictatorships in 1989 and the failure of the Soviet coup in 1991. In each of these cases, large numbers of people withdrew their usual support for or acquiescence to the government. The army and police – or a significant proportion of them – also withdrew support.

*Civil Resistance*, then, covers much the same ground as a number of previous studies of nonviolent action, such as Gene Sharp's classic *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*. Randle's book is a most welcome addition to the literature on the subject, for not only is it up to date but it is eminently readable. This makes it one of the very best books that supporters of nonviolent action can recommend to friends who do not know a lot about the subject.

Randle's treatment is comprehensive without getting bogged down in detail or pedantic expositions of theory. He is at his very best in describing briefly numerous historical examples of nonviolent struggles, such as the Indian independence movement, the Czechoslovak resistance to the Soviet-led invasion in 1968, and the Iranian revolution. His treatment of the historical development of nonviolent action is excellent, as is his account of the dynamics of this method of action.

The book includes an extensive discussion of "defence by civil resistance," otherwise known as social defence, nonviolent defence, civilian-based defence, and civilian defence. Randle gives a nice account of the development of the idea of civilian defence, discusses different views on strategy and analyses links with democracy, both parliamentary and popular.

Michael Randle is eminently qualified to write this book. He registered as a conscientious objector to British military service in 1951, was a key figure in the British peace movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s, has been imprisoned several times for participating in nonviolent direct action, was a council and executive member of War Resisters International for nearly 30 years, and in the 1980s was coordinator of the Alternative Defence Project and the Social Defence Project – among other things. This experience comes across in *Civil Resistance* through the confident portrayal of events and arguments related to peace, war and nonviolent action.

Randle is content to give a presentation of the views of different theorists of civil resistance rather than to present his own original contribution. For the most part, his account is quite balanced. For example, he ably describes both the "positive" mode of waging conflict, based on persuasion and conversion, and the "negative" mode which includes nonviolent coercion, commenting on the differences and overlaps between them. However, I was disappointed by the treatment of a couple of areas.

First, Randle has little analysis of the state as a system of power built on a monopoly of violence. His discussion is sympathetic to parliamentary democracy and often seems to assume that the main reason countries have armies is to defend against external threats. An alternative view is that military forces are essential to the maintenance of the standard systems of political and economic power.

Second, Randle does not discuss grassroots strategies for promoting civil resistance. He devotes many pages to discussing government interest (limited though it has been) in civil resistance and to discussing the views of leading theorists. But he scarcely mentions the existence of community groups investigating and promoting civil resistance, though there has been considerable activity in countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and France. So, ironically, it is strategy for activists who are part of "civil society" that is most lacking in his treatment of civil resistance.

But perhaps these omissions do not matter very much, especially since Randle devotes a full chapter to the strong link between civil resistance and participatory democracy. He recognises that popular participation is essential to building a system of civilian defence. Appropriately, it is quite likely that this book will be a major aid in promoting this participation.