



Howard Clark's scholarship: commitment and contribution

Submitted by April Carter on Fri, 19/12/2014 - 00:00

April Carter explores Howard Clark's academic contribution to the study of nonviolent action. Clark had special expertise on the civil resistance in Kosovo against Serbian oppression from 1988 to 1998. But his writing and knowledge of many struggles was internationalist in breadth.

Howard was committed to war resistance and anti-militarism from his student days and his campaigning and writing reflected his belief in the ideal of nonviolence, his environmental commitments and his constructive version of anarchism. He was not, however, a dogmatist, well aware of the pressures and problems of actual campaigns, the dangers people faced and their need for appropriate international solidarity. In recent years he became increasingly respected for his knowledge of and contribution to the study of civil resistance as a means of unarmed struggle. His research and writing on the civil resistance in Kosovo against Serbian oppression from 1988 to 1998 gave him special expertise, but he also had a wide-ranging knowledge of many struggles, often illuminated by his own visits and contacts - for example of Poland, Chile and South Africa in the 1980s.

He honed his writing and editing skills as a co-editor of the UK-based international pacifist paper *Peace News* in the 1970s, where he also covered many nonviolent campaigns. After he left his full time job at the paper, *Peace News* continued to publish his articles: a very interesting campaign he documented was the resistance by the U'wa people in Colombia to oil drilling ('An obstacle to progress', *Peace News*, Dec 2002-Feb. 2003, pp.12-13). *Peace News* also published articles in which Howard developed his ideas on the strategy appropriate to nonviolent campaigns. A good example is the 1978 ['De-developing nukes'](#) [1], based on his experience of campaigning against nuclear power, and republished by openDemocracy. His *Peace News* pamphlet, *Making Nonviolent Revolution*, originally published in 1978, but reproduced (with an afterword on the Indignados campaign in Spain and a 45-year old cooperative in Venezuela) in 2012, examined his vision of "people acting in their own situations to take control of their own lives and asserting different values" as opposed to "a united mass movement sweeping away...the status quo".

As an activist as well as a theorist, Howard was very aware of the importance of planning, organisation and advance preparation and training for nonviolent action. He contributed with three others to a pamphlet on *Preparing for Nonviolent Direct Action* published by *Peace News* and CND in 1984, urging a small group approach to organising. He also co-wrote with Javier Garate and Joanne Sheehan the *War Resisters' International Handbook for Nonviolent Campaigns* (2009), which provided case studies, but also had substantial sections on organisation, developing campaigns and training.

Howard's most sustained research was on the movement of nonviolent resistance in Kosovo in response to the increasingly draconian suppression of the rights of the Albanians in this province of Serbia in the 1980s. His book *Civil Resistance in Kosovo* (Pluto Press 2000) analysed the initial impressive mobilisation, including the election of an independent parliament and creation of parallel schools and a university, and then explored why nonviolent resistance lost momentum and the Kosovo Liberation Army, which began to launch armed attacks in 1996, was able to become a key player on the international scene when Serbia launched military reprisals and NATO intervened. His concern for Kosovo was reflected in a paper he wrote for the Committee for Conflict Transformation Support, 'Kosovo: Preparing for After the War' (1999), and 'Kosovo Work in Progress: Closing the Cycle of Violence', published by the Centre for the Study of Forgiveness and Reconciliation at Coventry University in 2002. A succinct updated analysis of the unarmed movement in Kosovo was his chapter ['The Limits of Prudence: Civil Resistance in Kosovo, 1990-98'](#) [2] in Adam Roberts and Timothy Garton Ash, eds., *Civil Resistance and Power Politics*, 2009, republished by openDemocracy. Howard argued that the nonviolent movement should have risked being more confrontational, and should have developed its constructive programme further. He also noted the limits of a strategy of noncooperation, where Serbia was not dependent on the Albanian population, and the need for a stronger attempt to foster links with potential allies inside Serbia.

The question of how resisters can be given appropriate transnational support, by sympathetic governments, parliaments or civil society groups was one of Howard's key concerns. He co-wrote with Veronique Dudouet a report for the European Parliament (PE407.008 Brussels, May 2009) *Nonviolent Civic Action in support of Human Rights and Democratization*. But he was also very aware of the pitfalls, not only of direct government support, but also sometimes intervention by major international nongovernmental organisations with their own agendas or by unofficial bodies that could be seen as politically biased. The book he edited, *People Power: Unarmed Resistance*



and Global Solidarity (Pluto 2009) explored these issues in relation to a range of movements, examining positive and more negative examples.

Howard had definite views that he wanted to express. But he was also an excellent collaborator, and generous in giving his time and expertise to other authors. He played a leading role in organising two international conferences on civil resistance for the Coventry University Centre for Peace and Reconciliation Studies, where he was an Honorary Research Fellow. The first 'Unarmed Resistance: The Transnational Factor' in July 2006 led to his 2009 *People Power* book noted above; the second on 'Nonviolent Movements and the Barrier of Fear' in April 2012 brought together veterans of struggles (for example in South Africa and East Germany) with those still involved in resisting repression in Zimbabwe, Egypt, Palestine and elsewhere.

Several of his publications, as noted above, were also the product of collective effort. In addition he contributed a chapter on Kosovo and his editorial skills to the book *Recovering Nonviolent History* (2013) edited by Maciej Bartowski, who stressed in the acknowledgements Howard's help in developing the book, his historical insights and role as 'mentor and ghost editor'. Howard also contributed significantly to compiling the annotated bibliography *People Power and Protest Since 1945* (Housmans 2006), and to volume 1 of the greatly expanded and updated version, *A Guide to Civil Resistance*, published in December 2013 (and [reviewed by Paul Rogers](#) [3] in openDemocracy) at the time of Howard's most untimely death.

Originally published on [openDemocracy.net](#) [4].

Tags:

- [Howard Clark](#) [5]

Source URL (modified on 21/01/2015 - 10:23): <https://civilresistance.info/articles/howard-clarks-scholarship-commitment-and-contribution>

Links

[1] <https://www.opendemocracy.net/civilresistance/howard-clark/dedeveloping-nukes>

[2] <https://www.opendemocracy.net/civilresistance/howard-clark/limits-of-prudence-civil-resistance-in-kosovo-199098>

[3] <https://www.opendemocracy.net/paul-rogers/non-violence-past-present-future>

[4] <https://www.opendemocracy.net/civilresistance/april-carter/howard-clark%E2%80%99s-scholarship-commitment-and-contribution>

[5] <https://civilresistance.info/tags/howard-clark>