THE LITTLE BOOK OF
NON-VIOLENT
EXTREMISTS
Foreword

This little booklet makes the big point that some non-violent ‘extremists’ turn out to be heroic people of global significance.

These were people willing to be in a minority of one. People who shook up the consensus of the day. How glad we are that they did.

Following recent terror attacks, Government ministers renewed their determination to confront non-violent extremists – those who show “vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values”.

Our little list of heroes could easily have breached this threshold were it in place in their day.

They stood firmly against violence, yet were vilified as extremists who incited violence and revolution.

Their beliefs were so out of kilter with the thinking of the time that all were accused of breaching fundamental values in some way or other.

They were victims of the most appalling violence yet didn’t hit back. They practised what they preached.
Most will agree that our society hasn’t reached some golden age which is incapable of further improvement. In order for there to be social change, the social consensus has to be broken. Someone has to shake it up and face being insulted in the process.

This has happened time and again in our own land and throughout the world.

Abolishing segregation was fiercely unpopular in the southern US states. It took those like Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks to overturn that consensus. But had the Government’s plans to tackle “extremism in all its forms” been in force in their day, no doubt the freedom of both would have been under threat.

Sometimes unpopular ideas are just what a society desperately needs. Ideas put forward by people once thought seditious, dangerous or just plain crazy have greatly blessed our land and others. Democracy needs dissent, and silencing it undermines its very foundations.
“agitation has resulted in strife and violence”¹

The Georgia Commission on Education

Viewed as ‘a dangerous leader’²

(by Government officials)
Rosa Parks

Parks became known as the “mother of the civil rights movement” in America.³

Her refusal to surrender her seat to a white passenger on a public bus in Montgomery, Alabama, was “the spark that ignited the beginning of the end for segregation”.⁴

Barack Obama

Awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1996) and the Congressional Gold Medal (1999).⁵
'The most dangerous Negro leader in the country' \(^6\)

'\textit{The most notorious liar in the country}' \(^7\)

J Edgar Hoover, FBI Director

'\textit{inciter of hatred and violence}'

'\textit{extremist}' \(^8\)

Alabama clergy
Martin Luther King, Jr

King’s leadership of the civil rights movement was fundamental to its success, leading to civil rights reform and the end of racial segregation in the US.⁹

His movement transformed national politics to win the vote for black people.¹⁰

Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (1964), the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1977) and the Congressional Gold Medal (2004).¹¹
Convicted of sedition and sentenced to six years in prison.
Mahatma Gandhi

“Father of the Nation”¹³

Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first Prime Minister

Gandhi’s “approach of non-violence will resonate forever as a positive legacy – not just for the UK and India, but the world over”.¹⁴

David Cameron

“His example of non-violent protest is still revered throughout the world today.”¹⁵

Professor David Hardiman
Her book, Uncle Tom’s Cabin...

‘planted seeds of violence’  
‘was dangerous’
‘could lead to the ultimate overthrow of Southern society’
Harriet Beecher Stowe

In her book, Stowe revealed the horrors of slavery to readers in the US and beyond.¹⁸

“...in stating the reasons which led to the emancipation of the slave, it would be difficult to exaggerate the role played by this remarkable book”.¹⁹

Mary Church Terrell, one of the first African-American women to earn a US college degree
‘a spreader of sedition’

King Henry VIII

“devil-worshipper”

Sir Thomas More

Tried and convicted of treason and burnt at the stake
William Tyndale

Tyndale pioneered the translation of the Bible into English so that it was accessible to everyone to read or hear.\(^{23}\)

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

“...his genius, now acknowledged, makes him, alongside Shakespeare, one of the co-creators of the modern English language...”

“William Tyndale is one of the greatest men in English history...”\(^{24}\)

Melvyn Bragg
Jailed for over twelve years for being a ‘seditious sectary’ and an ‘illegal preacher’

‘If left unpunished, he would tend to the subversion of all government’

Vicar of Northill, Bedfordshire

Perceived as a threat to social order
John Bunyan

“John Bunyan is known throughout the world as the author of The Pilgrim’s Progress, one of the greatest classics in the English language.”

Professor W R Owens

The 1689 Act of Toleration, which finally permitted freedom of religion for non-conformists, would have been unthinkable without the determined efforts of dissidents like Bunyan.
‘A danger to the welfare of the community’  
Sir William Clay MP

‘could bring about the ruin of the country’  
Joseph Hume MP
Lord Shaftesbury

“...one of our country’s most effective and successful politicians”.

William Hague

“No man has in fact ever done more to lessen the extent of human misery, or to add to the sum total of human happiness.”

Biographer

“Few statesmen have served the poor and marginalized in their day more than Lord Shaftesbury”.

Professor David Bebbington
‘irresponsible rabble-rouser’\textsuperscript{36}

‘fouler of the minds of children’\textsuperscript{37}
Josephine Butler

“Britain’s first anti-prostitution campaigner and remains one of our greatest social reformers...

“...instrumental in the campaign to raise the age of consent from 12 to 16 to protect girls from sexual abuse. She helped expose the scandal of children trafficked between Belgium and Britain, and the trade in underage virgins on the streets of London”. 38

Julie Bindel, feminist and journalist
Accused by General Gascoyne MP and others of fomenting revolution and murder in the West Indies
William Wilberforce

The architect of ending slavery in the British Empire.

“...his extraordinary combination of humanity, evangelism, philanthropy and political skill made him one of the most influential Britons in history”. 40

William Hague

“...a leader who stirred the conscience of the nation and upheld the human rights and dignity of the slaves”. 41

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
‘wild fanatic’ ⁴²

George Lavington, Bishop of Exeter

Viewed as dangerous to society ⁴³
John Wesley

Founder of Methodism.

Early opponent of slavery.

“...the poor were neglected and Wesley sought them out”. 44

Woodrow Wilson
“the safety of the country was at stake” 45
Judge Baron Williams, explaining why he sentenced the six farm labourers to transportation to Australia

Trade Unions are...
“the most dangerous institutions that were ever permitted”
The Morning Post, London

“evil” 46
King William IV
“The Tolpuddle Martyrs were a group of agricultural labourers who were tried and transported to Australia for the ‘crime’ of trying to form a union. Their story is key to the formation of modern trades unionism.”

The Trades Union Congress
The Prime Minister William Pitt tried to suppress these ‘dangerous’ schools, fearing they could lead to revolution.
Sunday schools

Robert Raikes (pictured) and others founded Sunday schools to help teach children to read, especially those from a poorer background.\textsuperscript{50}
“despotic socialism” and “altogether subversive of religious liberty”

Thomas Huxley
The Salvation Army

William Booth (pictured, founder of the Salvation Army) helped the destitute in society in practical ways. Through educational and training schemes he offered prostitutes, homeless and migrants a chance to create a better life.\textsuperscript{52}

The Salvation Army established mission stations to house and feed the poor. It spread quickly over Britain and internationally.\textsuperscript{53}
“Plimsollism is another word for terrorism” 54

J W Mitchell, letter in the Shipping Gazette

‘The statements of Mr Plimsoll were those of a mere fanatic’ 55

Thomas Turnbull, Whitby shipowner
Samuel Plimsoll

MP who campaigned to make merchant ships safer by pushing for a law which obliged shipowners to mark their ships with a safe load-line. Facing a storm of litigation from shipowners, he was forced to sell his mansion near Sheffield to cover the legal fees.\textsuperscript{56}

“...in the teeth of fierce opposition from influential shipowners, [he] championed the cause of improved safety at sea”.\textsuperscript{57}

Dr Sam Willis, historian and presenter
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