The non-violent protests of civil rights activists and antinuclear campaigners during the 1960s helped to redefine Western politics. But where did they come from? Sean Scalmer uncovers their history in an earlier generation’s intense struggles to understand and emulate the activities of Mahatma Gandhi. He shows how Gandhi’s non-violent protests were the subject of widespread discussion and debate in the USA and the UK for several decades. Though at first misrepresented by Western newspapers, they were patiently described and clarified by a devoted group of cosmopolitan advocates. Small groups of Westerners experimented with Gandhian techniques in virtual anonymity and then, on the cusp of the 1960s, brought these methods to a wider audience. The swelling protests of later years increasingly abandoned the spirit of non-violence, and the central significance of Gandhi and his supporters has therefore been forgotten. This book recovers this tradition, charts its transformation, and ponders its abiding significance.

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Acknowledgements

It has taken a long time to research and write this book and many people and institutions have helped me. I was supported by a grant from the Australian Research Council and enjoyed employment in the Department of Sociology at Macquarie University and then the School of Historical Studies, University of Melbourne. Supportive colleagues kept my spirits up in both workplaces.

Librarians and archivists at the Commonweal Collection, J.B. Priestley Library; at the Swarthmore College Peace Collection; at the India Office, British Library; and at the Peace Pledge Union were all extremely helpful. I enjoyed the hospitality of the Smart family and the Robertson family while in London.

A large number of friends and colleagues have commented on drafts: Verity Burgmann, Joy Damousi, Nathan Hollier, Terry Irving, Kurt Iveson, Ara Keys, Stuart Macintyre, and Jeff Sparrow. Joy Damousi merits special mention for her continued guidance and enthusiasm when I took the plunge and sought publication.

At Cambridge University Press, Michael Watson was an encouraging and generous editor and Gillian Dadd has been of further assistance. The anonymous readers appointed by the Press offered incisive commentaries that greatly improved the manuscript. Tom Weber, who later identified himself, was particularly giving of his time and wide knowledge.

The Scalmer family, and the Riordans, have been consistently supportive and interested. My thanks to my friends, too.

Finally, I wish to thank Bridie Riordan. This book has been written with her encouragement; throughout its composition I have been delighted and refreshed by her love and support. It is for her.