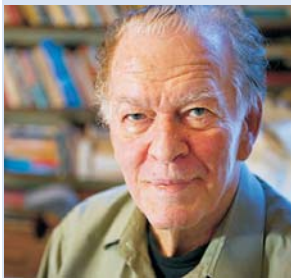


## THE PHILOSOPHY OF NONVIOLENCE



## GENE SHARP

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Every protest movement is unique and different from all others. However, an analytical approach can reveal what they have in common: (a) anger over reduced economic benefits from the State, and (b) confusion about what types of action should be used to express that anger.

It may seem that the most effective policy with regard to such groups is total prohibition, but this is actually not the case. An increase in the number of groups in society does not necessarily lead to increased tension. In fact, an increase in independent groups is often beneficial. However, in potential conflicts such groups need to act wisely and nonviolently; problems arise when they promote chaos and violence rather than a peaceful diversity of ideas and opinions. **Diverse groups are beneficial to a democratic society so long as they act nonviolently.**

Unfortunately, politicians sometimes use the excited mood of certain social groups to provoke violence in society. In order to prevent this kind of problem it is important to develop an increased knowledge of

nonviolent methods of protest and how to properly apply these methods while respecting the views of others. While conflict is inevitable and political violence is certainly widespread, both can be minimized and channeled into nonviolent expression, which is ultimately the most effective way to maintain and expand democratic societies.

The world is facing a great deal of serious problems, from weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, to the threat of dictatorships, hunger, military action and control, racism, and ethnic prejudices. Furthermore, there is the increasing problem of figuring out appropriate strategies for increasing and maintaining democratic systems. Of course, it is unlikely that these problems can be solved within the next ten years. What is important, however, is that in the coming decade significant steps can be taken to reduce the severity of these problems and thus contribute to their ultimate resolution. To this end, and for the sake of global development, humanity must learn to adopt nonviolent methods of struggle. ■

## CITY FRINGE UNDERDOGS

## Zakhar Prilepin

■ *A wave of social revolts has swept across Europe over the past year and something similar has also happened in Russia on December 11, 2010. Do you think that there is something special about the fact that youth are protesting in Russia?*

Since I live in Russia and not in Europe, I am contaminated with the Russian brand of ‘conspirology’ rather than the European one. As a result, it sometimes seems to me that the public will in Europe is expressed in a rather more spontaneous manner than is the case in Russia, where even the most spontaneous mass campaigns are always covertly manipulated by particular public figures. Apart from that, civil society and civil solidarity tend to be much stronger in Europe, while the influence that these factors have in Russia is rather minimal. Russians are more socially estranged than is the case with Europeans and we never attend public rallies unless the issues are of critical importance to us personally. The events that took place on Manezhnaya Square are no exception to this rule.

■ *What is the most effective state policy to pursue in a situation involving youth revolt?*

From the point of view of the State, **the most effective policy would be to buy up a certain part of the right-wing activists and intimidate a certain part of the fan-movement.** In other words, the State should, by all means, try to neutralise the activity being carried out by that part of the youth who rallied on Manezhnaya Square. However, taking recourse to such measures would effectively cause the government to delay finding an immediate solution to what are the obvious and pressing problems that will ultimately shape the future of the country.

One of the most obvious problems today is the so-called ethnic issue. It is improper to ignore the fact that the federal mega-tranches flowing into the Caucasian republics tend to be embezzled by many representatives of ethnic minorities, who direct these colossal tax-exempt funds towards their countries. This is something that produces resentment with a major part of the population, which ultimately puts pressure on the government to do something to stop it. However, any active measures in this direction would require a revolution from above in order to change the nature of the current authorities. Russia currently finds itself at a stage in its development where an anti-bureaucratic revolution from above would certainly do it some good.

We’ve seen football fans rallying on Manezhnaya Square and it is important to realise why they actually did that: they are fighting against bureaucracy. Bureaucracy in sports clubs and in the field of sports is practically identical to the bureaucracy that exists in the government and political sphere, since bureaucracy always pushes to preserve the *status quo* as its principal aim, rather than actually resolving problems that are putting the survival of the entire society in danger.

■ *Why is today’s youth choosing such scandalous and shocking methods for their struggle? Is it because the State has abandoned young people?*