

# Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution

BY RICHARD STITES

Pamela Orłowska and Agatha Leach  
November 6, 2013

---

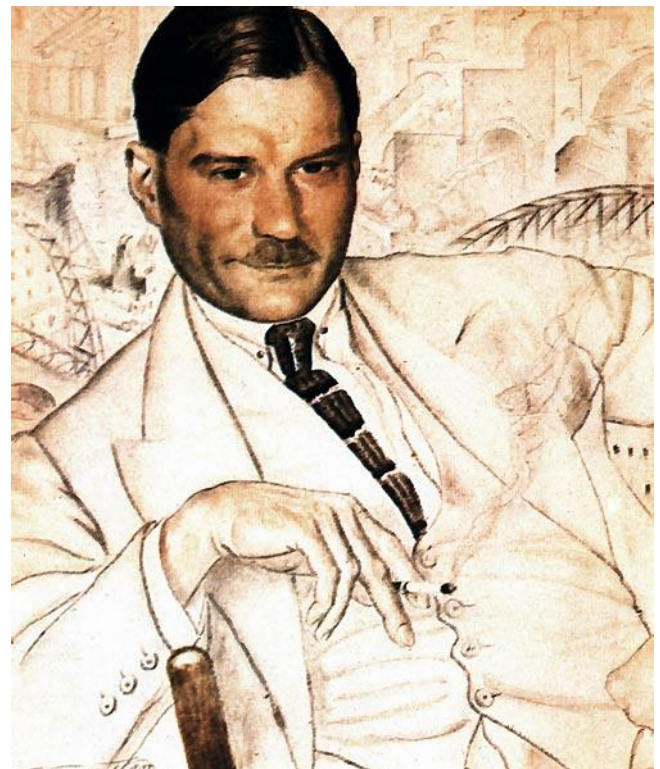
An excerpt from Nikolai Chernyshevsky's *What Is To Be Done?* (1920).

won't think she'll miss it. She's a clever girl and honest. She'll think to herself, 'That's all trifles, rubbish I despise'; and she will, too. But does it really help if a person doesn't realize what he lacks, or, if he does, he insists that he doesn't need it at all? That's an illusion, a fantasy. Human nature is stifled by reason, circumstances, and pride. It keeps silent and doesn't make itself known to one's consciousness, all the while silently doing its work of undermining life. A young girl shouldn't have to live like that; a beautiful woman shouldn't have to live like that. It's not right if she's dressed worse than others, if she lacks sparkle on account of her limited means. I pity you, poor dear. I thought things would somehow turn out a little better for you. But what about me? I'm the winner. It's still uncertain whether she'd have married me two years from now, but now she will. . . ."

Nikolai Chernyshevsky, *What Is To Be Done?* trans. Chto delat' (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1989), 150.



Original Cover to Bogdanov's *Red Star* (1908).  
([http://rosswolfe.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/safe\\_image.jpeg](http://rosswolfe.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/safe_image.jpeg))



Portrait of the author Yevgeny Zamyatin (*We*) by  
Boris Kustodiev (1923), drawing.  
[http://az.lib.ru/img/z/zamyatin\\_e\\_i/text\\_0188/index.shtml](http://az.lib.ru/img/z/zamyatin_e_i/text_0188/index.shtml)

An excerpt from Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1921).

**“Why? Well, why don't we grow feathers or wings, but have only shoulder blades, bases for wings? We have aeros; wings would only be in the way. Wings are needed**

**in order to fly, but we don't need to fly anywhere. We have arrived at the terminus. We have found what we wanted. Is that not so?”**

Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*, trans. Gregory Zilboorg (New York: Dutton Paperback, 1924), 85-86.



Flag of the Russian SFSR (1920-1937) as described in the Russian Constitution of 1925.  
[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d6/Flag\\_of\\_the\\_Russian\\_SFSR\\_1925-1937.svg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d6/Flag_of_the_Russian_SFSR_1925-1937.svg)



The Red Banner, flag of the Soviet Union, (1923-1955).  
[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/58/Flag\\_of\\_the\\_Soviet\\_Union\\_%281923-1955%29.svg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/58/Flag_of_the_Soviet_Union_%281923-1955%29.svg)

Poem by V.D. Alexandrovsky (1918)

Blow up,  
Smash to pieces  
The Old World!  
In the head of battle of the Universal Stuggle  
By the glow of flames  
Show no mercy—  
Strangle  
The bony body of destiny!

V.D. Alexandrovsky, *Proletarskie poetry pervykh let Sovetskoi epokhi* (Leningrad: Sovetskii Pisatel, 1959), 79, quoted in Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 72.



113. Same as No. 112.



114. A tree comes off his horse. The bronze statue of the famous general Skobelev is being hoisted down by order of the liberal government. The original statue of General Skobelev stood directly in front of the headquarters of the Moscow Soviet, where its presence was no doubt "distasteful reminder of the past."

Demolition of the statue of Alexander III (upper panel); demolition of the statue of Mikhail Dmitriyevich Skobelev, military officer of prominence in Turkish War of 1877-78 (lower panel).

(1923).

<http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?51973>

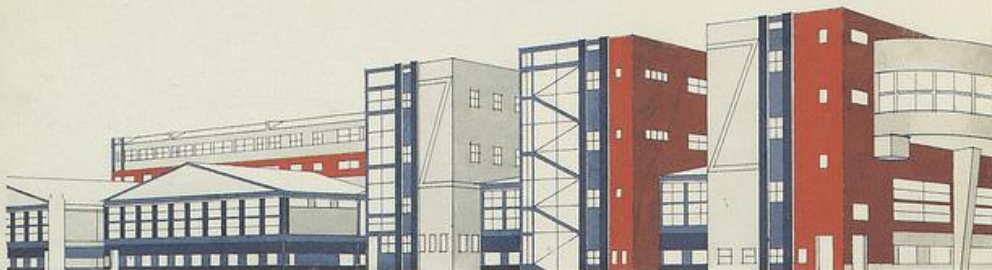
**ВАРИАНТ**  
ДЛЯ МЕРИДИОНАЛЬНОЙ ОРИЕНТАЦИИ



Leningrad housing quarter (Kondratyevvsky residential block). Competition entry, perspective (1928)

МАО

НАРОДНЫЙ ДОМ  
ИМЕНИ  
ЛЕНИНА



Il'ia Golosov, Lenin House (1924)

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/98803345@N06/with/10331184064/>



Futuristic drawing of Aleksei Gastev by Tolkachev (1924)

<http://rosswolfe.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/dbf82d1e290b.jpeg>



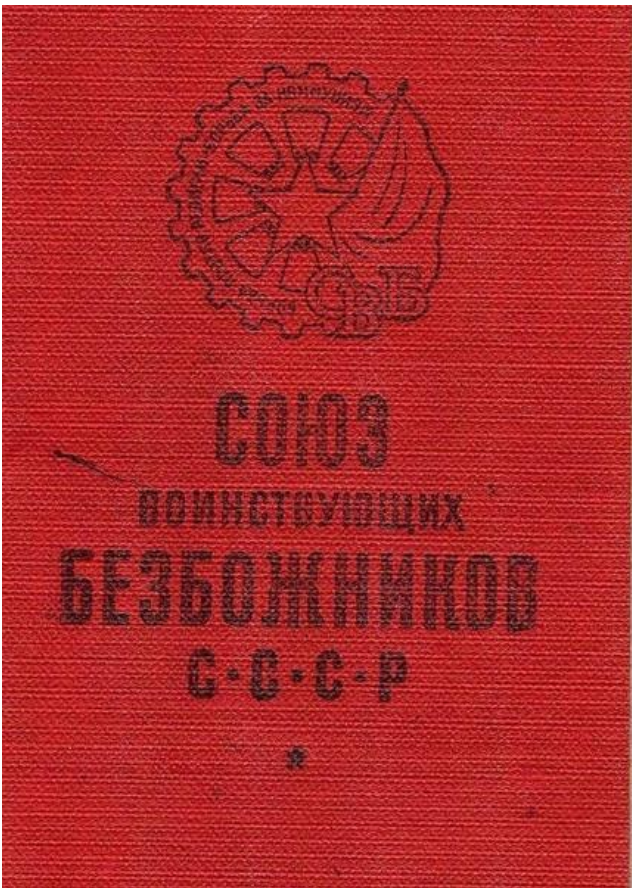
NOTist time-motion experiment with hammer, from the Central Institute of Labor [TsIT] (1925)

[http://rosswolfe.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/xussr\\_23.jpeg](http://rosswolfe.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/xussr_23.jpeg)



View newsreel footage of Nikolai Bernstein speaking on his work on biomechanics, for which he was awarded the Stalin Prize.

<http://youtu.be/yDxPJlBqWuM>



The cover of the membership card of the Union of Militant Atheists (*Soyuz Voinstvuyushchikh Bezbozhnikov*)

<http://back-in-ussr.com/2013/05/antireligioznaya-propaganda.html>



Anticlerical cover of the Soviet journal *Bezbozhnik* (1929), depicting Jesus being dumped from a wheelbarrow; text suggests the Industrialization Day can be a replacement of the Christian Transfiguration Day.

[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/37/Bezbozhnik\\_u\\_stanka\\_15-1929.jpeg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/37/Bezbozhnik_u_stanka_15-1929.jpeg)