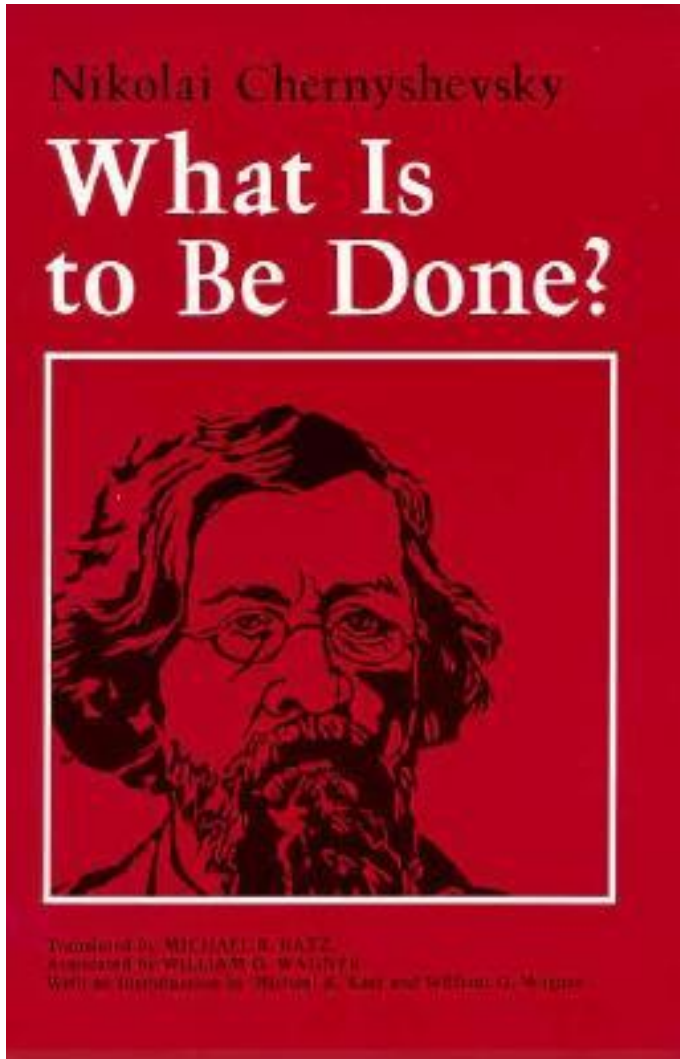

Nikolai Chernyshevsky

What Is to Be Done?



Title: What Is to Be Done?

Author: Nikolai Chernyshevsky

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Description

"No work in modern literature, with the possible exception of Uncle Tom's Cabin, can compete with *What Is to Be Done?* in its effect on human lives and its power to make history. For Chernyshevsky's novel, far more than Marx's *Capital*, supplied the emotional dynamic that eventually went to make the Russian Revolution." Joseph Frank, *The Southern Review*

Almost from the moment of its publication in 1863, Nikolai Chernyshevsky's novel, *What Is to Be Done?*, had a profound impact on the course of Russian literature and politics. The idealized image it offered of dedicated and self-sacrificing intellectuals transforming society by means of scientific knowledge served as a model of inspiration for Russia's revolutionary intelligentsia. On the one hand, the novel's condemnation of moderate reform helped to bring about the irrevocable break between radical intellectuals and liberal reformers; on the other, Chernyshevsky's socialist vision polarized conservatives' opposition to institutional reform. Lenin himself called Chernyshevsky "the greatest and most talented representative of socialism before Marx"; and the controversy surrounding *What Is to Be Done?* exacerbated the conflicts that eventually led to the Russian Revolution.

Michael R. Katz's readable and compelling translation is now the definitive unabridged English-language version, brilliantly capturing the extraordinary qualities of the original. William G. Wagner has provided full annotations to Chernyshevsky's allusions and references and to the sources of his ideas, and has appended a critical bibliography. An introduction by Katz and Wagner places the novel in the context of nineteenth-century Russian social, political, and intellectual history and literature, and explores its importance for several generations of Russian radicals."

Insightful reviews

Krista Danis: Though I do think Chernyshevsky is scatterbrained in his storytelling, and to reject the advantages of plot yet use one to convey political meaning is to necessarily detract from both efforts, there were a few sparkling gems to extract from this influential Russian novel. His illustration of the "new" household dynamic was quite progressive, not only for his time but for modern standards of domesticity. Though idealistic, the explanation of profit distribution in the workshops and how each worker contributed to decision-making was revolutionary (which is exactly what Chernyshevsky was going for).

I will return to this book after I read a little more on Russian history, politics, and communism.

Michael Steger: This is a rather peculiar book, which I enjoyed quite a lot. It was written in 1863, while its author, Nikolai Chernyshevsky, was in prison for opposing serfdom. Chernyshevsky, who spent a number of years in prison and died in forced exile in Siberia, was considered one of the most radical men of his time, one of the 'new men' of the 1860s, who opposed themselves to the 'men of the '40s' such as Dostoevsky and Turgenev. 'What Is to Be Done?' was for a long time considered the

exemplary radical Russian novel, depicting women and men whose approach to life is essentially one of rational egoism and utilitarianism (Chernyshevsky was greatly impressed by Mill), and who occasionally say things like, 'chemistry is infinitely more needed by society than is poetry.' The characters engage in intellectual debates; there are stories within stories (reminiscent of Dostoevsky); the heroine, Vera Pavlovna, starts a cooperative employee-owned workshop for seamstresses; and there is a love triangle reminiscent of 'Jules et Jim' (and here the rationalism breaks down strangely and darkly, but I won't say more). Chernyshevsky was a great admirer of 'Vanity Fair,' and in this, his only novel, he often addresses his characters and his readers in a manner not unlike Thackeray. Indeed, he often wittily mocks his reader: "How perceptive you are! As soon as you are told something, you note it instantly and glory in your penetration. Accept my admiration, reader with the penetrating eye!" Dostoevsky, who was enraged by Chernyshevsky's materialism, rationalism, socialism, feminism and optimism, wrote 'Notes from Underground' and a good bit of 'The Demons' as a response (there are also references in 'Brothers Karamazov'). Chernyshevsky's novel also was a favorite of Lenin and his revolutionary comrades, and it has been said that 'What Is to Be Done?' was more influential in laying the foundations for the Russian revolution than anything written by Marx.

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Mayta Quix: understanding the recognition of the book, i presumed it should develop into a dry reading...well...some components of the ebook did, a wide percentage of the textual content serve to show Chernyshevsky's socio-political propaganda in a seriously didactic demeanour (some are usually relatively corny too, eg Verochka's first dream and the ultimate destiny of Lopukhov). Yet, it additionally possesses scenes of sardonic wits, sound arguments and strangely whimsical tone, similar to whilst the materialist writer stated that "...the materialistic rationalization of existence is unsatisfactory..."I think this publication primarily offers with the subject of human evolution -foreseeing utopian way forward for a "rural heaven on earth"- allegorically manifested within the feminist awakening of Vera, overcoming each hindrances in her reside to ultimately succeed in a transcendental prophetic revelation of this way forward for mankind.

Thom: so as to comprehend the underpinnings of recent Russia and its contemporary history, you should comprehend Nikolai Chernyshevsky. Lenin for one credit "What is to be done" because the so much influential booklet within the improvement of his social conscious, and with no him doubtless the realm will be a really varied position than it's today. A needs to read.

Carlodelarosa: The author, or narrator, claims this booklet has no "artistic merit". He used to be right. I do enjoy examining this, however, considering the fact that this publication had such an impression that might finally result in the Revolution. it truly is essentially the Uncle Tom's Cabin of Russia. i do not accept as true with the tips Chernyshevsky presents, yet nevertheless it is fascinating to get an perception into the cultural dilemmas of mid nineteenth century Russia.

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