

FROM KAMCHATKA TO GEORGIA
THE BLUE BLOUSE MOVEMENT AND EARLY SOVIET SPATIAL PRACTICE

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
The Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2013

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
DEITRICH SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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The Blue Blouse movement (1923-1933) organized thousands of workers into do-it-yourself variety theatre troupes performing “living newspapers” that consisted of topical sketches, songs, and dances at workers’ clubs across the Soviet Union. At its peak the group claimed more than 7,000 troupes and 100,000 members. At the same time that the movement was active, the Soviet state and its citizens were engaged in the massive project of building a new society reflecting the aims of the Revolution. As Vladimir Paperny has argued, part of this new society was a new spatial organization, one that stressed the horizontal over the vertical, the uniform of the hierarchical, and the collective over the individual.

Relying on David Harvey’s revision of Henri Lefebvre’s spatial theories, this dissertation explores the role of the Blue Blouse movement in the production and reproduction of this new Soviet space, examining the spread of the movement across the material space of the Soviet Union; the production of a discursive space on the pages of *Blue Blouse*, the movement’s magazine; and the collective imagining of space on the stage during Blue Blouse performances. A detailed discussion of the Blue Blouse movement in Kharkiv, then capital of the Ukrainian SSR, examines the role that place, language, and nationality played in the new Soviet space. The concluding section deals with the displacement of the Blue Blouse from the center of the do-it-yourself theatre movement as its magazine was closed, its lead organizer arrested, and its work discredited. By aggressively promoting geographic and ethnic diversity in its bid to stretch

“from Kamchatka to Georgia,” the Blue Blouse enabled participation in a shared spectacle, which imagined a citizenry appropriate to this new state.

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PREFACE

A note on languages and names

When transliterating from Russian or Ukrainian I have used the Library of Congress system except for the names of people and places that have a commonly accepted English version; thus, I use Meyerhold instead of Meierkhol'd and Moscow instead of Moskva. Russian sources (including *Blue Blouse*) often only give the last name or last name and initials of individuals. When I know the first name of a figure that I am writing about, I give that; otherwise I provide what information I have. I frequently encounter names of two Ukrainian cities in documents written in both Russian and Ukrainian. For the sake of consistency I have chosen to use the Ukrainian spellings (Kharkiv and Kyiv) rather than the Russian spellings (Khar'kov and Kiev) even when they appear in documents originally written in Russian. All other place names are written in Russian—almost always the language of the original document in which they appear—rather than the language of the titular nationality of the territory they are located in (thus, Odessa instead of Odesa). Unless otherwise noted all translations are mine.

Acknowledgements

My work on this dissertation was made possible by funding from a number of sources including three Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships and one summer FLAS awarded by the Center for Russian and East European Studies, a Summer Language Institute scholarship

awarded by the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, and a Summer Dissertation Research Scholarship awarded by the Department of Theatre Arts.

I would like to thank my committee, whose work and advice have shaped this dissertation. Special thanks goes to Bruce McConachie for his patience and guidance throughout my time at Pitt—the idea for this dissertation originated with a conversation in his office during my first visit to Pittsburgh. Conversations with Buck Favorini about space and place have helped to sharpen my arguments about the relationship between them. Kathy George has always been incredibly supportive of my research, regardless of the directions that it has taken me. A directed readings in Russian class with Volodia Padunov gave me an early start on some of the research for this dissertation and he has been a constant source of advice about Russian and Soviet culture. I am extremely grateful to the faculty and staff of the theatre department for supporting me financially and intellectually for nearly a decade. I also would like to express my gratitude to the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures for their extraordinary generosity in always treating me as if I were one of their own.

I am also grateful to my friends and colleagues at the University of Pittsburgh for their camaraderie and support. I would like to thank the rest of the Organizing Committee for the Russian Film Symposium for providing me with a constructive outlet for my dilettantish (or is it interdisciplinary?) impulses. Olga Klimova and Natalie Ryabchikova have provided me with incredibly helpful advice about difficult translations. Jess Lawrence has been unbelievably generous with her time, copy-editing several sections of this dissertation and offering suggestions that have made my writing better. I am especially grateful to Colleen Reilly, Ryan Howe, Melissa Porterfield, Aidan Clemente, Vivian Appler, and Beach Grey for having the courage to share an apartment with me.

Presentations at the American Society for Theatre Research, the American Association for Slavic and East European Studies, the Mid-America Theatre Conference, the Comparative Drama Conference, and the University of Pittsburgh Center for Russian and East European Studies have helped to clarify the ideas in this dissertation, and I am grateful to my co-panelists and audiences for their feedback. An essay that I published in *Performing Arts Resources* gave me the opportunity to consider aspects of my methodology and source material in more depth than I might otherwise have; I thank editor Stephen Johnson for his feedback and enthusiasm for my work.

I would like to thank the administration and staff of the following archives and research libraries for their kindness, helpfulness, and patience as well as for allowing me to use the materials in their collections: In the United States, the Curtis Theatre Collection at the University of Pittsburgh (especially Bill Daw), and the Harvard Theatre Collection; in Moscow: the Bakhrushin State Central Theatre Museum (especially Natal'ia Mashechkina, Mariia Chernova, and Mariia Lipatova), The Lenin Russian State Library, The Central State Archive of the Moscow Region, The Russian State Archive of Film and Photo Documents (especially Elena Kulikova), The Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (especially Dmitrii Neustroev), The Russian State Archive of Social and Political History, The Library of the Union of Theatre Workers, and the Central Moscow Archive-Museum of Private Collections; in Kyiv: The Central State Archive Museum of Literature and Art of Ukraine, The State Theatre Museum of Ukraine, and The Vernads'kii National Library of Ukraine; in Kharkiv The State Archive of Kharkiv Region, the Stanislavskii Theatre Library, and the Korolenko Kharkiv State Research Library (especially Anna Verizhenko). I would also like to thank the administration at the Worker's Club of the Malyshev Factory in Kharkiv for providing me with material on the club's history,

Svetlana Ishevskaja for sending me an article related to the Blue Blouse's cinematic aspirations, Irina Peshkova at Union of Theatre Workers bookstore for helping me acquire copies of long out of print books, the Harvard Theatre Collection and New York Public Library for providing me with copies of their microfilm of a few issues of *Blue Blouse* early on in this process, and Nataliya DiDomenico and her mother for helping me procure some material from Ukraine after I had left the country. I am also especially grateful to the collection of film scholars who work or hang out at NIIK and who provided me with good advice, great conversation, and spectacular company, including Nikolai Izvolov, Sergei Kapterev, Nina Tsyrukun, and, especially, Irina Shilova, who is missed greatly.

I also wish to express my gratitude to and love for my families in Georgia for putting up with both my long absences and my occasional distractedness even when I am home: Jay Varner and Jamie Gumbrecht, Christina, Lucy, and Nathan Karstedt, and especially my parents, Jon and Cindy Crane who have been more supportive of and enthusiastic about my work than anyone could ever have the right to even dream.

Finally, I wish to thank my grandparents: Robert K. Crane, who took me to my first international academic conference when I was 6 years old; Mildred Price Crane, the first research librarian I ever knew—I thought of her often in Russia as I packed grocery bags full of photocopies into my suitcases; Jane Crane, who allowed me to clarify my arguments with her while riding horses in Memphis; Frank Sheffield, whose work ethic I strive to emulate and whose contumaciousness I am proud to have inherited; and Evelyn Sheffield, whose insistence that everyday life in Bostwick, Georgia *was* interesting and worth knowing about is, no doubt, at the root of my curiosity about what lies outside of Moscow. This dissertation is dedicated to them.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

We are Blue Blouseniks
We are Trade Unionists
We know everything about everything.
And around the world
We carry our satire
From edge to edge.¹

The Blue Blouse was a collection of artists, writers, theoreticians, and journalists who organized hundreds—perhaps thousands—of do-it-yourself theatre troupes throughout the Soviet Union between 1924 and 1932 and inspired dozens of imitators beyond its borders.² Blue Blouse troupes, supported by a bi-weekly magazine, performed “living newspapers” consisting of short topical skits, monologues, and songs for audiences at workers clubs, beer halls, and cafeterias. The organization was remarkably successful, claiming 100,000 members at the peak of its popularity, before its magazine was dissolved. While that number is undoubtedly an

¹ “Мы синемлузники” *Siniaia Bluza* 11 (1925), 7. Мы-- синемлузники,/ Мы-- профсоюзники,/ Нам все известно обо всем./ И вдоль по миру./ Свою сатиру/ От Края к краю мы несем.

² For an excellent discussion of the competing concepts of amateurism in the early Soviet Union, see Mally, Lynn. *Revolutionary Acts: Amateur Theater and the Soviet State*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000, 1-16. As she argues, a distinction was made between *liubitel'stvo* and *samodeiatel'nost'*, two concept both implying non-professionalism, but with the first growing out of love for the art (a contemporary example might be an non-professional production of an Ostrovsky play), while the second grows out of a politicized self-activation (corresponding more closely to the non-professional puppet theatre that is ubiquitous at anti-globalization demonstrations).

exaggeration, the Blue Blouse was a massive theatrical undertaking that reached millions of spectators.³

The Blue Blouse movement began in 1923 as a project of three students at the State Institute for Journalism, two of whom, Boris Iuzhanin and Viktor Mrozovskii, would form the core of the organization for years to come.⁴ While the review they staged did not originate the living newspaper form in the Soviet Union, the group quickly won institutional support, added troupes in Moscow and began publication of its self-titled magazine in 1924. Their success spawned imitators and by the end of 1924 there were dozens of similar groups reading their magazine and performing throughout the country.⁵

The Blue Blouse quickly developed strong ties with the “left” artists of the Russian avant-garde and some of Moscow’s leading variety theatre performers, lending significant aesthetic interest to much of their work. This led to the peculiar aesthetic of the Blue Blouse, which combined avant-garde composition, a commitment to political education, the traditional theatrical forms of the Russian variety stage, and elements of folk performance. A performance of the Blue Blouse would move seamlessly from mass chants and machine dances to (topical) popular songs and comic monologues delivered by Ded Raeshnik, a long-bearded, felt-booted stock character from the pre-Soviet fairgrounds. They tied all of this together through the familiar voice of the *Rupor* or barker.⁶

³ For a discussion of the difficulties involved in determining a more precise count of Blue Blouse troupes, see my article “The Performance Historian as Cold Case Detective: Reopening Nikolai L’vov’s Investigation of the Blue Blouse Movement.” *Performing Arts Resources 28: A Tyranny of Documents: The Performance Historian as Film Noir Detective*. Ed. Stephen Johnson. New York: Theatre Library Association, 2011. 225-232;

⁴ For accounts of the early days of the Blue Blouse, see Uvarova, Elizaveta. *Estradnyi Teatr: Miniatiury, obozreniia, miuzik-kholly (1917-1945)*. Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1983, 89-91 or Mally, *Revolutionary Acts* 65-68.

⁵ Uvarova, *Estradnyi Teatr* 291.

⁶ For a good description of a typical Blue Blouse performance see Stourac, Richard and Kathleen McCreery. *Theatre as a Weapon: Workers’ Theatre in the Soviet Union, Germany and Britain 1917-1934*. London: Routledge, 1986, 30-39.

As the Blue Blouse grew in national prominence, it began to devote more and more attention to its relationship with local troupes, organizing the first of several national congresses of Blue Blouseniks (as members called themselves) in 1925. The magazine served as a resource for provincial troupes and as a forum in which they could share their achievements. By the end of its publication it featured a space for correspondence, a registry of troupes, a pullout inset titled “Blue Blousenik: the Organ of the Blue Blouse Movement,” and a section on Blue Blouse activities “in the localities” (*Na mestakh*). The organization considered local topicality to be one of its central goals, encouraging the creation of sketches addressing local needs and even publishing them when they felt they were very good. This local emphasis manifested itself in many ways, ranging from the names of troupes (many troupes in the Donbass mining region, for example, called themselves the “Black Blouse”) to the language of the performance. The importance the Moscow organizers of the Blue Blouse attributed to their local affiliates was attested to by the album they produced following their 1927 tour of Germany, a full half of which is devoted to photographs of troupes from all over the Soviet Union.⁷

This movement, which tied local troupes to a statewide organization was the greatest success of the Blue Blouse.⁸ They encouraged thousands of people across virtually the entire territory of the Soviet Union to become Blue Blouseniks, which meant seeing themselves as part of a larger movement and being confronted with images and accounts of others like themselves. The Blue Blouse, in other words, actively encouraged citizens of the still-new Soviet Union to

⁷ The album (*Siniiaia bluza 71-72, 1927*), a double issue of their journal, was the major self-promotional publication created by the Blue Blouse, containing photographs of their best work and their most prominent members, their most important programmatic statements, reviews of their work (especially foreign reviews of their tour of Germany), and blurbs from prominent figures, including Kalinin, Dzerzhinsky, and Lunacharsky. In this context, their willingness to publish nearly 200 photographs of provincial troupes demonstrates just how important these troupes were to their understanding of what they were doing.

⁸ This criticism is quoted in Mally, *Revolutionary Acts* 70.

imagine themselves as a part of a community, centered in Moscow but spread across the territory of Russia and the national republics.

In this, the Blue Blouse were a part of the larger project of imaginative geography, in which the Soviet state and its citizens were engaged. Walter Benjamin noted in his *Moscow Diary* that “Russia is beginning to take shape for the man of the people. On the street, in the snow lie maps of the [R]SFSR, piled up by street vendors who offer them for sale.... The map is almost as close to becoming the centre of the new Russian iconic cult as Lenin's portrait.”⁹ This “taking shape” was not a coincidence, argues slavacist and film historian Emma Widdis, but the result of

a vast process of map-making which took place in Soviet Russia in the first two decades after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Producing and disseminating images of the territory was a crucial task for the new regime, marking the boundaries of power, creating a coherent, shared notion of Soviet space. It was a form of social incorporation.... But the map-making process was not limited to cartography. All the resources of Soviet propaganda (films, visual arts, literature) were enlisted in the project of creating a new imagined geography for the young regime.¹⁰

This dissertation will examine in detail the role of the Blue Blouse in this “map-making process.” Tracing the activities of Blue Blouse troupes and the ways in which their performance practices shaped and reflected emerging Soviet spatial practices, it will explore in detail their relationship to their own cities, to the Moscow troupes, to the Blue Blouse movement as whole,

⁹ Quoted in Widdis, Emma. “Russia as Space.” Simon Franklin and Emma Widdis, eds. *National Identity in Russian Culture: an Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 30-49, 30.

¹⁰ Widdis, “Russia as Space” 32.

and to the New Soviet State. As the complex relationship between the editorial board and magazine in Moscow and their readers shows, the “social incorporation” achieved by the new imagined geography was in many ways an interactive process. After all, these readers did not passively consume the Blue Blouse’s magazine: they formed troupes and performed throughout the provinces and national republics, all the time considering themselves to be *samodeiatel’nye*--self-acting.

The history of the Blue Blouse movement and its aesthetic goals, as well as the details of its success and popularity, have been discussed in a number of works, including Deak, Dmitriev, Leach, Mally, Stourac and McCreary, Uvarova, and Zolotnitskii.¹¹ None of these, however, do more than touch on the key issues that will be dealt with in my dissertation. While all of these works mention the existence of affiliated troupes throughout the Soviet Union, none of them

¹¹ Amirad-Chevel Claudine. “La Blouse Blue.” *Le Theatre d’Agit-Prop de 1917 a 1932*, v.1. Denis Bablet, ed. Lausanne: La Cité-L’age d’homme, 1977. 99-109; Deak, Frantisek. “Blue Blouse.” *The Drama Review*. 17.1 (March 1973), 35-46; Dmitriev, Iurii A. *Teatral’naia Moskva 1920-e gody*. Moskva: Gosudarstvennyi Institut Iskusstvovznaniia, 2000. 40-63; Leach, Robert. *Revolutionary theatre*. London: Routledge, 1994. 168-174; Mally, Lynn. *The Americanization of the Soviet Living Newspaper*. The Carl Beck Papers 1903. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Center for Russian and East European Studies, 2008. Mally, *Revolutionary Acts* 65-73; Stourac and McCreary 3-76; Uvarova, *Estradnyi Teatr* 92-132; Uvarova, Elizaveta. “Siniaia bluza.” *Voprosy teatra*. 1973 [1975], 288-311; Zolotnitskii, David. *Zakat teatral’nogo oktiabria*. Sankt-Peterburg: Rossiiskii institute istorii iskusstv, 2006. 246-252. For English-language discussion of their work that was published in the 1920s, see “Blue Blouses of Moscow.” *Christian Science Monitor*. 3 April 1928, 12; Carter, Huntley. *The New Spirit in the Russian Theatre*. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1970 [1929]. 260-261; Flanagan, Hallie. *Shifting Scenes of the Modern European Theatre*. New York: Coward-McCann, 1928. 108-109; “Four Scenes from Russian ‘Living Newspapers’.” *Theatre Arts Monthly* 10.1 (January 1926), 53-56. There have also been a few published translations of Blue Blouse pieces: “Jogging the Memory by the Blue Blouse Troupe from A Averchenko.” *Cabaret Performance Volume 2: Europe 1920-1940*. Laurence Senelick, ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993. 177-181; “Blue Blouse Skit” *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, Poems, Songs, Movies, Plays, and Folklore, 1917-1953*. James von Geldern and Richard Stites, eds. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995. 85-86; “Herriot et MacDonald.” *Le Theatre d’Agit-Prop de 1917 a 1932*, v.2. Denis Bablet, ed. Lausanne: La Cité-L’age d’homme, 1977. 71-77; “Debout pour lutter, Esclaves colonisés.” *Le Theatre d’Agit-Prop de 1917 a 1932*, v.2. Denis Bablet, ed. Lausanne: La Cité-L’age d’homme, 1977. 81-85; Maiakovski, V.V. et O.M. Brik. “Radio-October.” *Le Theatre d’Agit-Prop de 1917 a 1932*, v.2. Denis Bablet, ed. Lausanne: La Cité-L’age d’homme, 1977. 86-98; Le Travail ménager et L’Ouvrière.” *Le Theatre d’Agit-Prop de 1917 a 1932*, v.2. Denis Bablet, ed. Lausanne: La Cité-L’age d’homme, 1977. 138-141; “Les plus actifs contre toutes les Maladies.” *Le Theatre d’Agit-Prop de 1917 a 1932*, v.2. Denis Bablet, ed. Lausanne: La Cité-L’age d’homme, 1977. 142-147; Kourdine, D. “Un Peturbateur à la caserne.” *Le Theatre d’Agit-Prop de 1917 a 1932*, v.2. Denis Bablet, ed. Lausanne: La Cité-L’age d’homme, 1977. 148-153; Argo et. Ia. Galitzki. “Désenchan... thés.” *Le Theatre d’Agit-Prop de 1917 a 1932*, v.2. Denis Bablet, ed. Lausanne: La Cité-L’age d’homme, 1977. 154-162.

attempts to discuss the activities of Blue Blouse troupes outside of Moscow in any detail at all. Similarly, while many of these authors discuss some of the texts created by the Blue Blouse in an attempt to illustrate their aesthetics, these works have not generally been examined as actual artistic products that might have something to say about the period in which they were written. Additionally, while articles published in *Blue Blouse* have been used as sources, the magazine itself has not been treated as an object of study. In short, while some of my work will rely on the excellent research that has already been done by these authors, the use of materials and the focus of this dissertation diverge significantly from the work that has come before it.

1.1 THE BLUE BLOUSE IN TIME: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BLUE BLOUSE MOVEMENT

The Blue Blouse Movement began as a class project at the State Institute of Journalism. Inspired by the living newspapers and “oral newspapers” that had been prevalent throughout the civil war period, a group of students at the institute including Iuzhanin, Mrozovskii A. Liakhovets and V. Voskresenskii, organized a series of performances under the name “Unigaz,” short for *Univarsalnaia gazeta* or Universal Newspaper (Figure 1).¹² The group attracted attention with

¹² On The Living Newspaper movement more broadly see Korev, S. *Zhivaia gazeta v klube*. Moskva: Novaia Moskva, 1925; Mally, *Revolutionary Acts*; Verpinski, M. *Zhivaia gazeta*. Moskva: Doloi negramotnost', 1927; *Zhivoi zhurnal v klube*. Moskva: Doloi negramotnost', nd. This influence was acknowledged by Iuzhanin in an article recounting the early days of the Blue Blouse Movement. Iuzhanin himself was a member of “Smekhopur” (“The Laughter Front”), a wartime living newspaper in Chita while he served on the Eastern Front. Iuzhanin, Boris. “Piat'.” *Siniaia bluza* 76 (1928), 51-52; 51.

performances at the celebration of the one year anniversary of the institute and the 1923 All-Union Gathering of Journalists, which was hosted by the institute.¹³

ПЕРВАЯ ТРОЙКА ОРГАНИЗАТОРОВ СИНЕЙ БЛУЗЫ (1923 год).



Figure 1. The first trio of Blue Blouse organizers in 1923. B. Iuzhanin, V. Mrozovskii, and V. Voskresenskii. Sinaia bluza 71-72 (1928), 5.

The group received an invitation from Mosselprom, the organization that provided Moscow with agricultural goods, to organize productions at the cafeterias and beer halls of Moscow. Shortly after Iuzhanin accepted, the group began performing under the name Blue Blouse.¹⁴ The reasoning behind their name has been explained a number of ways, but Mrozovskii claimed that they chose to call themselves Blue Blouse, not because it was the standard uniform of workers as is often claimed, but because it was the standard depiction of workers on agitational posters.¹⁵ Their early performances in the cafeterias and beer halls were relatively unsuccessful-- the performers were, after all trained as journalists rather than entertainers-- but they quickly formed an alliance with Neridai (Don't Worry), one of Moscow's

¹³ Afinogenov Aleksandr. "Iz zapisnoi knizhki 'Starika'." *Izbrannoe* t.1. Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1977, 467-468.

¹⁴ Iuzhanin, "Piat'" 51. Zolotnitskii, *Zakat* 246. The playwright Aleksandr Afinogenov was also a student in the State Institute for Journalism at this time and describes the first performance in his memoirs. He also argues that B. Igritskii was the originator of the idea, rather than Iuzahnin, who only oversaw the groups transfer to Mosselprom. Afinogenov 467-468.

¹⁵ On the name, see Uvarova, *Estradnyi Teatr* 96, Dmitriev 41.

cabarets, and with the addition of talented writers like Viktor Tipot, Viktor Ardov and Vladimir Mass and skilled performers like Georgii Tusuzov the group gained popularity among the patrons of the beer halls.¹⁶ At this time the first female members of the troupe, Liudmila Berkovich, L. Domogatskaia and V. Rebone, joined the troupe as well.

In 1924, Blue Blouse received sponsorship from the Moscow Regional Council of Trade Unions (MGSPS) and began to perform frequently at the workers clubs in Moscow and to publish the magazine *Blue Blouse* with the council's imprint, *trud i kniga*.¹⁷ The Blue Blouse began to perform regularly at the workers clubs around Moscow. Even though they established additional troupes to meet the demand for their services in all of these venues, it was not unusual for Blue Blouse troupes to stage several performances a day.¹⁸ At this time the Blue Blouse also made a shift towards professionalization, paying actors, directors and writers for their work, leading to occasional accusations that they had betrayed the do-it-yourself ethic.¹⁹ The groups continued commitment to the principles of that ethic caused them to treat their finances with a degree of indifference: when paying authors for texts published in the journal, for example, Iuzhanin would offer them the cashbox, asking them to take the sum that they felt was appropriate.²⁰

The Blue Blouse quickly associated itself with many of the most prominent avant-garde theatre artists in Moscow. They attracted the attention of several poets associated with the futurist journal, *LEF*, including Vladimir Maiakovsky, Sergei Tretyakov, and Nikolai Aseev.

¹⁶ Brik, Osip. *Estrada Pered Stolikami*. Moskva: Teakinopechat, 1927, 7-8.

¹⁷ Iuzhanin "Piat'." 51. Uvarova, *Estradnyi Teatr* 96.

¹⁸ The organizer of a Blue Blouse performance at a Moscow workers club in 1926 complained bitterly to the MGSPS about the high price charged by the troupe, claiming that the overcharging was made even worse by the fact that the performers sped through the already short performance because they had three other shows to get to that day. TsGAMO f.180 op.1 d.1554 l.12.

¹⁹ Uvarova, *Estradnyi Teatr* 107-108; Mally, *Revolutionary Acts* 70.

²⁰ Vladimir Mass recalled that the authors usually took a minimal honorarium for their work. Iuzhanin, himself, never accepted payment for the texts he published in *Blue Blouse*. Uvarova *Estradnyi Teatr* 101. Dmitriev 54.

Tretyakov and Osip Brik, another prominent futurist associated with *LEF* who had been hired to oversee the Blue Blouse's work for Mosselprom, contributed several theoretical articles, while the constructivist artist Nina Aizenberg designed costumes and props for the group.²¹ Tamara Tomiss, one of experimental choreographer Nikolai Foregger's students, and Sergei Iutkevich from the FEKS (the Factory of the Eccentric Actor) group directed Blue Blouse troupes in Moscow, as did Aleksandr Macheret.²² Mrozovskii worked with Meyerhold at his theatre's "Club-methodological laboratory;" and eventually Foregger himself began directing and training Blue Blouse performers.²³

The Blue Blouse rapidly gained a large following across the Soviet Union through their magazine. At the end of 1925, in an attempt to begin to organize their followers into a coherent movement, the editorial board organized the first All-Union Gathering of Blue Blouseniks. The gathering's participants passed a number of resolutions, which formalized the groups methodological principles, called for a strengthening of ties to the trade union movement and demanded an improvement in the quality of the material published in the magazine.²⁴ A second gathering was held the next year, which led to the creation of a registry of Blue Blouse troupes and initiated the magazine's attempt to establish formal ties not merely to the MGSPS—a Moscow organization, but to the statewide All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (VTsSPS).²⁵

²¹ On Aizenberg's career, see Sosnovskaia, Alla. "Nina Aizenberg (1902-1974): Russian Designer." *Slavic and East European Performance* 20.3 (2000). 48-73.

²² On Iutkevich, see Iutkevich, Sergei. *Sobranie Sochenenii*, 3tt. Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1990 and Moldavskii, Dm. S. *Maiakovskim v teatre i kino: Knige o Cergee Iutkeviche*. Moskva: VTO, 1975.

²³ For a good discussion of the individual contribution's of these artists, see Dmitriev 40-63. For Mrozovskii's involvement with the Meierkol'd Theatre's Club-methodological laboratory, see RGALI f.963, op.1, d.1103.

²⁴ The theses and resolutions of the gathering are published in *Siniaia bluza* 23-24 (1925), 84-90.

²⁵ The theses and resolutions of the Second All-Union Gathering of Blue Blouseniks are published in *Siniaia bluza* 44 (1926), 59-64.

In 1927 the Blue Blouse established a permanent theatre in Moscow in a former movie theatre on Strastnaia square.²⁶ By this time the organization had 14 professional collectives working in Moscow, including the Base Group, the Shock Group, the Exemplary Group, and the “Estrada-Vaudeville” group. During this period the group employed a number of actors, who were already, or would soon become stars of the Soviet variety theatre, including Boris Tenin, Lev Mirov, Rena Zelenaiia, Evsei Darskii, Mikhail Garkavi and Klavdiia Koreneva.²⁷

The 1927 tour of Germany, during which one of the main Moscow Blue Blouse troupes performed in 25 cities for 150,000 spectators, marked the peak of their international success. During the tour Iuzhanin made the acquaintance of major European artists like Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht, both of whom attended the Blue Blouse’s performances.²⁸ In addition to the influence that these performances had on established leftist artists, the notoriety generated by the tour led to the establishment of workers theatre troupes imitating the Blue Blouse across Western Europe and in the United States as well.²⁹

In 1928 the VTsSPS took over the publishing wing of the Blue Blouse, closing down their magazine and promising them a section in their own aesthetically conservative periodical *Club Stage [Klubnaia Stsena]*. Even though this special section never came to be, the merger effectively dissolved the movement's major organizational tool. At the same time, the Moscow troupes were moved from the purview of the Administration of Moscow Theatrical-Spectacle Undertakings (UMZP) to the State Administration of Music-Hall, Estrada, and Circus Enterprises (GOMETs), which could be seen as a blow to their aesthetic legitimacy. Iuzhanin

²⁶ Dmitriev 63.

²⁷ Dmitriev 54.

²⁸ For speculation about the Blue Blouse’s influence on Brecht, see Eaton, Katherine Bliss. *The Theater of Meyerhold and Brecht*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985, 13-14, 32.

²⁹ See Mally, Lynn. “Exporting Soviet Culture: The Case of Agitprop Theatre.” *Slavic Review* 62.2 (Summer 2003); 324-42. For Germany and England see Stourac and McCreery 87-268. For their connections to American workers theatres, see Mally, Lynn. *The Americanization of the Soviet Living Newspaper*.

and his collaborators briefly tried to revive the organization, publishing a new magazine, *Small Forms of Club Spectacle* [*Malye formy klubnogo zrelishcha*], which closed after two years.

Following the closure of the magazine much of the best talent that surrounded the Blue Blouse slowly wandered away from the organization. As a result, the quality of performances began to slip as did the group's popularity. In 1931 Iuzhanin was removed from the administration of the organization, and arrested. In early 1933, following a great deal of criticism, the Blue Blouse was finally closed because of "unprofitability."³⁰

1.1.1 The Blue Blouse in Performance

The Blue Blouse served as a vital link between the pre- and post revolutionary traditions of Russian variety theatre, that can be broadly grouped under the label, *estrada*. Deriving its name from the small outdoor stages used to hold summer concerts, *estrada* performances can encompass everything from stand-up comedy and short sketches to light popular music and full circus acts.³¹ As cabarets opened and closed throughout the relatively volatile NEP period, the Blue Blouse troupes in Moscow provided a politically acceptable refuge for seasoned variety artists as well as a training ground for young ones.³² While the direct influence of the Soviet cabaret scene on Blue Blouse performance was mitigated by the influences of futurist poetics and

³⁰ For the best account of the final years of the Blue Blouse, see Dmitriev 61-63. Also, Uvarova, *Estradnyi Teatr* 128. Stourac and McCreary suggest that the Blue Blouse was closed because of the attacks made on them by the Revolutionary Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP). While these attacks certainly had an impact, it is worth noting that the Blue Blouse outlasted RAPP, which was dissolved earlier in 1932, with the Party Central Committee Decree on the Reorganization of Literary and Artistic Organizations.

³¹ For a discussion of the nature of *estrada*, as well as the difficulty of providing a definition for an art-form that, characterized by its variety, "has no muse" of its own, see chapter 1 of Uvarova, Elizaveta. *Russkaia Sovetskaia estrada 1917-1929: Ocherki istorii*. Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1976.

³² The movement of people into and out of various *estrada* theatres is rigorously traced in Uvarova, Elizaveta. *Russkaia Sovetskaia estrada 1917-1929: Ocherki istorii*. Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1976 and Uvarova, Elizaveta. *Russkaia Sovetskaia estrada 1930-1945: Ocherki istorii*. Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1977.

the practical experience of agitation in wartime living newspapers, both of these sources were highly influenced by pre-revolutionary *estrada* forms as well. Serving as an agitational variety theatre, the Blue Blouse employed a number of genres, and advocated switching rapidly between them over the course of a performance.³³

Most Blue Blouse performances began and ended with a march. The opening procession or *antre* announced the educational ambitions of the performance. The first *antre* published by the magazine begins:

We came to tell you, tell you, tell you,
What you all should learn, should learn, should learn. Yes!
From our newspaper, living newspaper, living newspaper,
Everything that happens under the sun,
You should learn about it all:
About the international situation,
And about the union movement,
About the new way of life,
And about malicious red tape....”³⁴

Later *antres* added a significant self-promotional dimension to the procession. From the beginning of 1925 on most were constructed around the variant of the groups signature chorus:

We are Blue Blouseniks
We are Trade Unionists
We know everything about everything.

³³ Stourac and McCreary offer a good account of the types of work staged by the Blue Blouse, including translations of portions of a number of texts.

³⁴ “Antre.” *Siniaia bluza* 1 (1924), 9-10.

And around the world
We carry our satire
Like a flaming torch.
We are Blue Blouseniks,
We Are Trade Unionists,
No Nightingales with accordions.--
We are just the nuts
On the great bolt
Of one family of laborers.³⁵

These lines were frequently used to close performances during a closing parade as well.

The majority of the material performed in between the parades consisted of short comic sketches. Early on, especially, these sketches frequently involved performers embodying more or less abstract entities in an attempt to clearly illustrate the relationships between them. An early sketch devoted to currency reform, for example involved performers portraying various forms of currency ranging from the tsarist ruble to the *Sovznak* (a temporary currency issued during the civil war) in an attempt to illustrate the proper ways to use these outdated currencies in order to strengthen Soviet finances (Figure 2).³⁶ A number of other sketches were comic scenes based on everyday life in the new Soviet Union. Vladimir Mass and I. Verkhovtsev, for example wrote a series of plays detailing the activities of Spichkin, a Soviet *zanni* making

³⁵ “Parad sinebluznikov.” *Siniaia bluza* 5 (1925), 5. Varlam Shalamov has suggested that this text was composed by Sergei Tretiakov. Music for this *antre* was later composed by Sigismund Kats. Shalamov, Varlam. “Boris Iuzhanin.” *Sobranie Sochenenii*. t. 2. Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1998. 252.

³⁶ “Vecher, posviashchennyi denezhnoi reforme.” *Siniaia bluza* 1 (1924), 33-38.

drunken or lecherous trouble in a Komsomol circle.³⁷ Others were more fantastic short plays loosely organized around a variety political theme. *Cannibals* follows the adventures of N’iam-N’iam, an African cannibal, as he encounters the church, imperial power, world war, and finally—happily—the international proletariat.³⁸

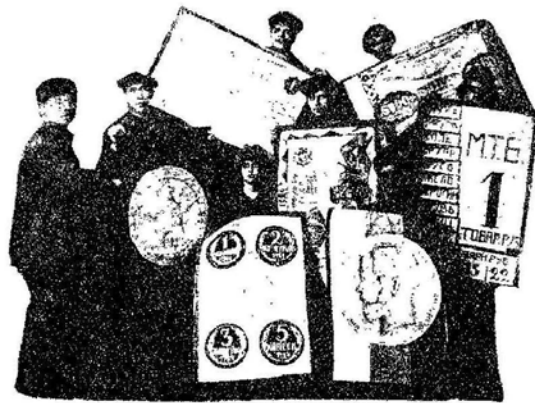


Figure 2. “An Evening Devoted to Currency Reform.” *Siniaia bluza* 1 (1924), 34.

Interspersed between the sketches were *chastushki*, comic songs that could be sung to a variety of popular tunes. Devoted to themes like electrification, women’s rights, the Komsomol, literacy, and even algebra, *chastushki* are organized around four line stanzas that form a coherent unit independent of the rest of the song. The lines are composed of tetrameter, usually organized around either an AABB or ABAB rhyme scheme, frequently enhancing their sing-song quality with the removal of a syllable. While the *chastushki* composed by the Blue Blouse were all nominally political, the humor was as often tangentially related to the topic as it was tendential, as in the following example, which is dedicated to geography:

Capital has received

³⁷ Mass, V. and I. Verkhovtsev. “V obshem i tselom.” *Siniaia bluza* 33 (1926), 4-10. Mass, V. and I. Verkhovtsev. “Razdvoenie lichnosti.” *Siniaia bluza* 36 (1926), 16-28; Mass, V. and I. Verkhovtsev. “Konkretnoe rukovodstvo.” *Siniaia bluza* 36 (1926), 29-35; Mass, VI. and I. Verkhovtsev. “Samoubiitsa.” *Siniaia bluza* 45 (1926), 3-10.

³⁸ “Liudoema.” *Siniaia bluza* 3 (1924), 39-50.

Quite an Awkward present:

Oh, in China it seems

The climate is dangerously hot....

At the workers school Ivan

Raged throughout the evening:

I'm as hot for her as a Volcano,

But she is like a glacier....

Brothers you should understand

That just like in a university

You can learn geography

With the Blue Blouse.³⁹

In addition to *chastushki* the Blue Blouse made heavy use, especially in their early years of the folk tradition known as *raek*. Traditionally *raek* was a fairground performance in which a humorous rustic, named Ded Raeshnik narrated a humorous story illustrated within a peepshow box. Sacrificing the box to the needs of performance before a large audience the Blue Blouse turned the Ded Raeshnik character into the teller of comic monologues. Costumed in a stereotypical peasant outfit complete with felt boots and a long beard, Ded Raeshnik's monologues frequently revolved around his encounters (as a naive yokel) with the new realities of an urban Soviet Union (Figure 3).

³⁹ "Geograficheskie chastushki." *Siniaia bluza* 18 (1925), 51-52.



Figure 3. Ded Raeshnik. *Siniia bluza* 1 (1924), 49.

Music was an integral part of all Blue Blouse performances—in addition to marches and *chastushki*, sketches were intended to be sung as often as they were meant to be spoken. For the first few years of their work, the Blue Blouse relied heavily on existing popular songs and marches, indicating in the text which tunes should be followed at which moments. As their work grew in popularity, they began to work more frequently with the professional composers Sigismund Kats and Konstantin Listov (both of whom had long careers as composers of light opera and popular songs following their work with the Blue Blouse), who regularly composed new music for their plays.

1925 also saw an influx of talent from the choreographer Nikolai Foregger’s Mastfor Theatre, after its building on Arbat street burned down, including the directors Sergei Iutkevich and Tamara Tomiss, and eventually Foregger, himself. One of the more tangible results of this merger was the introduction of “Machine Dances”—a form pioneered in Foregger’s studio—into the repertory of the Blue Blouse. These highly acrobatic dances celebrated modernity by turning groups of performers into, churning, grinding pumping pieces of machinery (Figure 4). In

addition to being a vibrant expression of industrial optimism, the athleticism required by these dances made them, and imitations of them, a welcome addition to the “Physical Culture” movement in the USSR.⁴⁰ Often paired with texts celebrating Fordism or NOT (*Nauchnaia organizatsiia truda*-- the scientific organization of labor), these pieces became some of the most visually striking (and, perhaps, most photographed) of the works performed by the Blue Blouse.

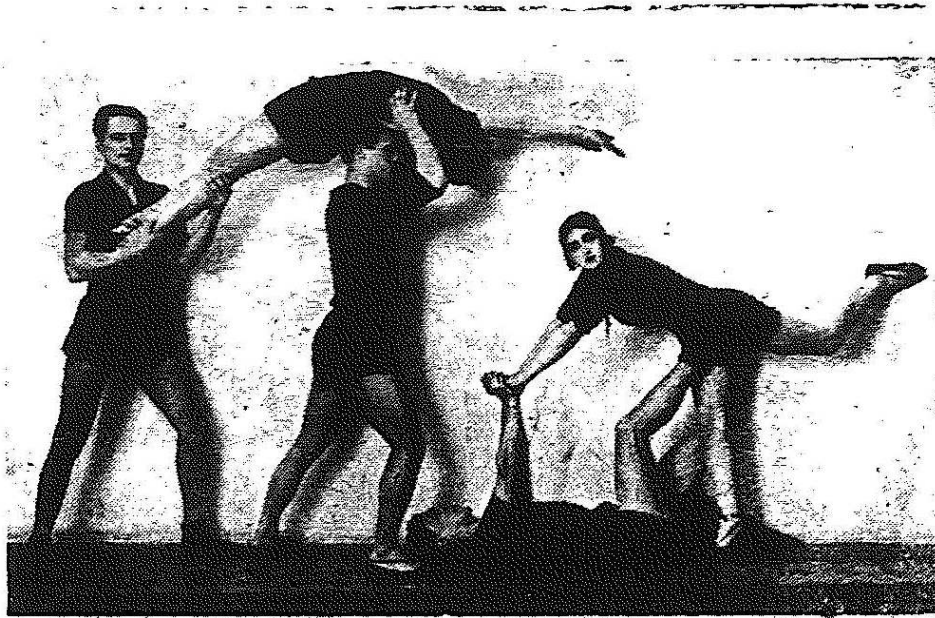


Figure 4. Tamara Tomiss, director. Physical culture number. *Siniaia bluza* 71-72 (1928), 29.

The visual impact of the Blue Blouse also increased significantly after the costume designer Nina Aizenberg, who trained at VKhUTEMAS, The Higher Art and Technical Studio, joined their ranks. An extremely inventive and talented artist working within a constructivist idiom, Aizenberg supplemented the standard uniform of the troupes (black trousers and a dark blue work shirt) with “applications” designed to be worn over this base. Moving beyond merely marking a character's social status, her costumes combined a formal fascination with asymmetry, minimalism, and utilitarianism with a dazzling playfulness (Figures 5 and 6).

⁴⁰ For a discussion of the physical culture movement, including a brief mention of the relationship of the Blue Blouse to it, see O'Mahony, Mike. *Sport in the USSR: Physical Culture-- Visual Culture*. London: Reaktion, 2006.



Figure 5. Nina Aizenberg. Costume design for *Koroleva Erred. Siniia bluza* 63-64 (1927), 9.



Figure 6. Nina Aizenberg. Costume design for *Karmen. Siniia bluza* 65-66 (1927), 16.

The Blue Blouse's commitment to *estrada* was, perhaps, the single most significant reason for their eventual disappearance. It forced them to become central actors in a dispute being waged in the late 1920s over the types of spectacle that were appropriate for performance of the stages of the Soviet Union's workers clubs. In opposition to the Blue Blouse, the editorial staff of the periodical *Club Stage*, who had the weight of VTsSPS behind them, argued that a decade after the revolution workers had matured sufficiently to produce the classics (or imitations of them) and had, essentially outgrown variety theatre. While the Blue Blouse, late in their existence, produced a full-length play, *Alarm! They're Sweeping it Away* by Viktor Ardov and Vladimir Mass as well as the Soviet Union's first full-length operetta *Koroleva Erred* (book by Mikhail Vol'pin, music by Listov), they remained firmly grounded in the variety theatre, mocking the proponents of "big plays" with their version of *Carmen*, for example, which imagined a version of Bizet's opera staged in a village club.⁴¹ In this sketch, the club's artistic coordinator attempts to respond to the slogan "Give us opera!" by staging one, even though he has never seen one himself. Fortunately, one of the villagers' uncle's brother's sister-in-law's sister had, so he had an idea what needed to be done. The result is a butchered version of *Carmen*, performed in the most rustic language possible, made "Soviet" to boot—when Carmen falls in love with the Toreador, a policemen proclaims, "Long live the union of the Local Committee of Tobacco Workers with the Local Committee of Local Urban Cattle-fighters!"⁴² At the end of this mockery of a theatrical production, the club's artistic coordinator reappears to drive home the message, deadpanning, "See, I told you that staging an opera would be a piece of

⁴¹ Ardov, V. and V. Mass. "Karaul, Zatiraiut!" *Siniaia bluza* 35 (1926); 7-51. Volpin, M and K. Listov. "Koroleva Oshiblas'." *Siniaia bluza* 63-64 (1927) 1-73. Galitskii, Ia. "Karmen." *Siniaia bluza* 65-66 (1927); 14-32.

⁴² Galitskii, Ia. "Karmen." *Siniaia bluza* 65-66 (1927); 14-32, 20.

cake.”⁴³ In the end, however, the dispute was won by *Club Stage*. The Blue Blouse’s periodical was closed and the division they were promised to publish *estrada* scripts within *Club Stage* never materialized.

1.2 CRITICAL METHODOLOGY

“An important feature of theatre is that it is always local and must be local,” states Gay McAuley in her discussion of theatre and space. As she goes on to argue, a “theatre audience is located in a particular place and also in a particular time.... [and] it is this double quality of being both local and located that is theatre's strength....”⁴⁴ While continuing to emphasize the situatedness of theatrical events, Ric Knowles’ discussion of theatrical performances intended for the contemporary festival circuits notes the “placeless” quality of these productions. While still technically grounded in a specific location and moment, these productions, he argues, often suffer from “losing touch with place,” resulting in the loss of context and the development of a “fuzzy universalism.”⁴⁵ A close examination of the Blue Blouse movement offers a way out of the dichotomy between a (good) local theatre that is grounded in place and a (bad) theatre that is intentionally dispersed over space, instead exploring the ways in which a statewide framework shaped and was shaped by the work of dispersed groups rooted in local communities.⁴⁶

⁴³ Galitskii 21.

⁴⁴ McAuley, Gay. *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999, 11.

⁴⁵ Knowles, Ric. *Reading the Material Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 89.

⁴⁶ While the failure of this dichotomy is more apparent when examining the Blue Blouse movement than most theatrical work, I suggest that it is broadly problematic. It fails to account for the importance of spatial practices in the generation of the local. Following the arguments of Doreen Massey that will be discussed shortly, it is important to remember that a theatrical performance is a temporary coming together of artists, audiences, scripts and material, all of whom have spatial trajectories outside of that articulation.

My exploration of this dynamic will be guided by the theorization of space and place done over the past few decades by critical human geographers such as Derek Gregory, David Harvey, Doreen Massey, and Edward Soja. While the work done by these authors sometimes varies significantly, they are united in their commitment to an understanding of space as fundamentally shaped by human social activity and, conversely, as a force capable of fundamentally shaping human activity. Soja, for example, when arguing for a “trialectics of being” insists upon the mutually constitutive nature of space, time, and society, compellingly making a case that primacy cannot be given to any one of them.⁴⁷ This understanding has guided these geographers to develop methodologies that enable them both to examine the social practices that shape the geography of our world and to explore the potential of spatial interventions to generate political change. In this dissertation I use their ideas largely as a framework to structure my exploration of historical material found in archives and periodicals, suggesting ways to select from and order the evidence available to me. In doing this, I hope to ground their discussion of space and place in a concrete analysis of the Blue Blouse movement, rather than forcing my historical subject into the abstractions of high theory.

My discussion of spatial practices is organized largely according to the framework elaborated by David Harvey in his attempt to generalize the shift in spatial practices that he argues constitute an essential component of the shift from modernity to postmodernity. As “a point of entry” to the discussion, Harvey creates a “‘grid’ of spatial practices.” On one side of the grid is a modification of a categorization of space devised by Henri Lefebvre, in which spatial practices are divided into three mutually constitutive categories: material spatial practices, representations of space (including discursive practices, codes and knowledges like geography,

⁴⁷ Soja, Edward W. “Thirdspace: Expanding the Scope of the Geographical imagination.” In Doreen Massey et al., eds. *Human Geography Today*. Cambridge: Polity, 1999; 260-278, 261-264.

planning and architecture), and spaces of representation (including imagined geographies and other imaginative practices that create meanings for spatial practices).⁴⁸ On the other axis of the grid are four interdependent aspects of space commonly discussed by geographers: accessibility and distancing, appropriation and use, domination and control, and production. Harvey is careful to note that his grid is not intended as a taxonomy, describing real aspects of space, but rather as a tool that “helps unravel some of the complexity... of spatial experience.”⁴⁹ As a tool, this framework has significant value in an analysis of the activity of the Blue Blouse movement; it can help to organize the discussion of their spatial practices into manageable chunks without abandoning their essential complexity by, for example, creating a dichotomy between their work and their ideas.

My discussion of the Blue Blouse movement within the dynamics of Soviet space considers the roles of troupes working in specific places as well. The relationship between space and place has been one of the more vexing issues dealt with in spatial theorization, but is perhaps best dealt with by Massey in her book, *For Space*. Here she argues against creating a dichotomy between place as something fixed and concrete and space as abstract and open, suggesting instead that “places” are constellations of spatial practices. Insisting upon the relational nature of these practices, she notes that,

sometimes there are attempts at drawing boundaries [between places], but even these do not usually refer to everything: they are selective filtering systems; their meaning and effect is constantly renegotiated. And they are persistently

⁴⁸ Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.

⁴⁹ Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990, 223.

transgressed. [We should think of p]laces not as points or areas on maps but as integrations of space and time; as *spatio-temporal events*.⁵⁰

Grounding her argument in an analysis of several places not merely in terms of the human activity that produces them but the geological as well, she notes that while place is never fixed, “in its temporary constellation we (must) make something of it.”⁵¹ This reconceptualization of place thus allows us to understand and explore the powerful role place can play in the organization of spatial, social and historical practices, without resorting to essentializations. As she puts it: “there can be no assumption of pre-given coherence, or of community, or of collective identity. Rather the throwntogetherness of place demands negotiation.”⁵² Importantly for the current work, such an understanding of place helps to make sense of the massive reorganization of territorial boundaries, administrative units, and national and multi-national populations that were all major parts of the Soviet programme in the 1920's.

This rejection of *a priori* coherence and collective identity invites the consideration of the work done by theatre scholars on the role that theatre can play in the construction of communities and national identities. As Susan Haedicke and Tobin Nellhaus argue in *Performing Democracy: International Perspectives on Urban Community-Based Performance*, issues of authority and empowerment are inherent in the creation and preservation of communities through community-based performances. The questions they raise—like “Who performs, whose material is performed, and who decides?”—guide my examination of the

⁵⁰ Massey, Doreen. *For Space*. Los Angeles: Sage, 2005, 130. The original reads, “sometimes there are attempts at drawing boundaries, but even these do not usually refer to everything: they are selective filtering systems; their meaning and effect is constantly renegotiated. And they are persistently transgressed. Places not as points or areas on maps but as integrations of space and time; as *spatio-temporal events*.”

⁵¹ Massey 141.

⁵² Massey 141.

activities of Blue Blouse troupes throughout this dissertation.⁵³ Loren Kruger's discussion of "national popular theatre" as a legitimizing force for the state in the late 19th and early 20th century is also especially relevant to a discussion of the Blue Blouse movement, which, due to its scale, was implicated in questions of national citizenship, popular aspiration, sovereignty, and legitimization.⁵⁴

The conclusion of this dissertation deals with a third category of spatial organization, based on the second spatial categorization produced by Henri Lefebvre in his book, *The Production of Space*. In an attempt to move beyond Cartesian dualism, Lefebvre posits that in addition to a "perceived" physical space and a "conceived" mental one, there also exists a "lived" space of experience that is not reducible to the other two.⁵⁵ This lived space is, perhaps, best dealt with by phenomenologist Edward Casey in his work, *Getting Back Into Place*.⁵⁶ Constructing a theory of "implacement" grounded in the human body, Casey explores the special

⁵³ Haedicke, Susan C. and Tobin Nelhaus, Eds. *Performing Democracy: International Perspectives on Urban Community-Based Performance*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001, 13.

⁵⁴ Kruger, Loren. *The National Stage: Theatre and Cultural Legitimation in England, France and America*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992. The value of theatre in the construction of national identities has been discussed extensively in Gounaridou, Kiki. Ed. *Staging Nationalism* Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005; Kolganov, A.A. ed. *Natsional'nyi teatr v kontekste mnogonatsional'noi kul'ury* Moskva: Fair-Press, 2004. Wilmer, S.E. *Theatre, Society, and the Nation: Staging American Identities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002; Wilmer S.E. ed. *National Theatres in a Changing Europe*. Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008; Wilmer, S.E. ed. *Writing and rewriting National Theatre Histories*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004. Recently, Catherine Schuler's *Theatre and Identity in Imperial Russia* has explored the performance of nation in Russia during the 19th century. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2009.

⁵⁵ Lefebvre 39. On the implications of "lived" space, see also Soja, "Thirdspace" and Soja, Edward W. *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. London: Verso, 1989.

⁵⁶ Casey, whose book argues for the primacy of a concrete experiential place over an empty abstract space, may seem like a strange fit with Lefebvre and his disciples, whose work deals first and foremost with the "production of space." This apparent misfit is due largely to terminological problems-- For Lefebvre and his followers space is anything but empty and abstract, the characterization put forth by a philosophical tradition that they too are at pains to dispute (Casey's book was written before Lefebvre's was translated into English, but he suggests in a footnote to the preface to the second edition that, "in [*The Production of Space*], place is everywhere implied even if only rarely thematized" (369, n5)). This is not to gloss over the differences between the two groups. Casey, for example, tends to work out from individual experience-- for him the link between being and place is grounded in the statement "I am here"-- While Lefebvre, Harvey, and the others, working from a materialist tradition begin with the social, touching only rarely on individuals. Despite these occasional differences and the terminological difficulty, I suspect that Casey's discussion of experience can only be amplified by exploring this experience within broader spatial practices and vice versa. Casey, Edward. *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place World*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2009.

importance of places in our lives, explaining our connection to specific locations-- the sense of comfort that a home can bring, for example, or the sense of loss felt by refugees. The Do-It-Yourself nature of Blue Blouse performances offers the possibility of a privileged glimpse into the “lived” space of Soviet workers, and one of the goals at work throughout this dissertation is to use archival documents in an attempt excavate evidence of Soviet citizens’ embodied experiences of place and the significance it had for them whenever possible. As Casey suggests, however, one of the most powerful forms of spatial experience is the sensation of displacement-- a sensation that was profoundly felt by members of the Blue Blouse movement as it was being dismantled.

In *Geographical Imaginations*, his introduction to critical human geography, Derek Gregory praises a work by Michael Watts for speaking “so directly to the present condition of human geography.” “His project,” he continues,

seeks to break open a particular knotting within the local-global dialectic: to show how difference and identity are produced within constellations of power earthed (so to speak) in interconnected spaces and wired together by political and economic relations; how difference and identity are contested, negotiated and shaped through cultural struggles.... These are not purely abstract concerns:...

They are the stuff of people's everyday lives.⁵⁷

This project, I hope, covers much of the same ground—exploring the ways in which the Blue Blouse movement helped to produce statewide identity and local difference, negotiating interconnected spaces and places, and forming a significant part of the stuff of the everyday lives of its participants.

⁵⁷ Gregory, Derek. *Geographical Imaginations*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994, 202-203.

1.2.1 Soviet Space.

In my characterization of Soviet spatial practices I will be relying heavily on the discussion of Soviet space in architectural historian Vladimir Paperny's *Culture Two: Architecture in the Age of Stalin*. In Paperny's structuralist account of the shift from the architecture of the 1920s to the architecture of the 1930s, he argues that the change is grounded in spatial ideologies that he calls "Culture One" and "Culture Two." The victory of Stalinist architecture over the architecture of the avant-garde, he contends, "can be seen as the expression of more general cultural processes, the most important of which is the victory of Culture Two over Culture One".⁵⁸ While his arguments are in some ways incompatible with the ideas of the critical human geographers who form the theoretical backbone of my dissertation (his argument relies heavily on the kinds of binaries that they are often at pains to dismantle and he argues for a cyclical conception of Russian history that is at odds with their understanding of space-time, for example), his work is grounded in a remarkable reading of the period's theoretical texts, buildings, places and spaces which creates a well-developed picture of the dominant spatial ideologies of the early Soviet Union.⁵⁹ The evidence he uses to support this schema and his insights are invaluable in the understanding of the larger spatial practices in which the Blue Blouse was operating.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Paperny, Vladimir. *Architecture in the Age of Stalin: Culture Two*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, xxiv.

⁵⁹ Paperny was at pains to minimize some of the problems suggested here, insisting, for example, that "it must be conceded that Culture One and Culture Two do not exist in reality.... Culture Two (like Culture One) is an artificial construction.... Furthermore I am convinced that the 1920s and 1930s were nowhere near as antipodal as it might appear" (xxiii), or apologizing for the misleading nature of his description of the "Good-Evil" binary, noting that he rejected a more precise title due to "a vain infatuation with laconism" Paperny, 326 n.1.

⁶⁰ Emma Widdis used his work in a similar way in her study of Soviet cinema and imaginative geography, *Visions of A New Land: Soviet Film from the Revolution to the Second World War*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003. Soviet Space is also the subject of the valuable collection of essays Dobrenko, Evgeny and Eric Naiman, eds. *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003.

As Paperny argues, Culture One, the dominant spatio-cultural formation of the post-revolutionary period was characterized by drives towards melting (as opposed to hardening), the mechanical (as opposed to the human) and the lyric (as opposed to the epic). While the last two binaries are most valuable in relating aesthetic trends to political ones, the first relates quite directly to the dominant characteristics of Soviet space in the 1920s. The drive towards melting led to an emphasis on temporariness and mobility oriented towards a broad horizontal uniformity. This uniformity, leveling hierarchies of people and hierarchies of space, strove towards a situation, in which, in the words of architects Mikhail Okhitovich and Moisei Ginsburg, “every center is a periphery and every periphery is a center.”⁶¹ This horizontality shifted during the Five Year Plan towards a vertical hierarchy, in which movement was limited by internal passports, wooden monuments were replaced by stone ones, and Moscow became a space so privileged that the Commissar of finances insisted that the construction of a building in the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria that was on par with those being built in the capital was “not affordable, nor necessary, and makes no sense at all.”⁶²

One of the most important ways in which this horizontality played out in the early years of the Soviet Union was the re-imagination of the relationships between the state and the various ethno-national territories of the space that the Soviet Union inherited from the Russian Empire. As historian Terry Martin summarizes, rather than attempting to leave these imperial relationships untouched, the Soviet government chose:

to confront the rising tide of nationalism and respond by systematically promoting the national consciousness of its ethnic minorities and establishing for them many

⁶¹ Okhotinovich, M. and M. Ginzburg. “Zametki po teorii rasseleniia.” *Sovremennaia arkhitektura* 1-2 (1930), 7-15. Quoted in Paperny 74.

⁶² Quoted in Paperny 76.

of the characteristic institutional forms of the nation-state. The Bolshevik strategy was to assume leadership over what now appeared to be the inevitable process of decolonization and carry it out in a manner that would preserve the territorial integrity of the Russian empire. To that end, the Soviet state created not just a dozen large national republics, but tens of thousands of national territories scattered across the entire expanse of the Soviet Union. New national elites were trained and promoted to leadership positions in the government, schools, and industrial enterprises of the newly formed territories. In each territory the national language was declared the official language of the government. In dozens of cases, this necessitated the creation of a written language where one did not exist yet. The Soviet state financed the mass production of books, journals, newspapers, movies, operas, museums, folk music ensembles, and other cultural output in the non Russian languages.⁶³

Martin calls this experiment in multi-ethnic state-building “the Affirmative Action Empire,” the organization of which was a key element of the texture of post-revolutionary Soviet space.⁶⁴ The

⁶³ Martin, Terry. *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001, 1-2.

⁶⁴ Martin 1. For Further discussion of the policies and practices surrounding the organization of the multi-ethnic Soviet State, see Slezkine, Yuri. “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism.” *Slavic Review* 53.2 (1994): 414-452; Suny, Ronald Grigor. *The Soviet Experiment: Russia the USSR, and the Successor States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998; and Suny, Ronald Grigor and Terry Martin, eds. *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. For a fascinating discussion of the role that ethnographers played in the state’s attempt to “correctly” draw borders, categorize individuals, and sort out language policy, see Francine Hirsch’s *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005. For a longer view of the history national formation on the western borders of the Soviet Union, see Snyder, Timothy J. *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus 1569-1999*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 2003. For an examination of the ways in which Orientalism affected the implementation of these policies, see Khalid, Adeb. “Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective.” *Slavic Review* 65.2 (2006): 231-251.

Blue Blouse played an important role in the production of Affirmative Action Empire, offering an inexpensive way to support the production of non-Russian national culture.⁶⁵

1.3 ORGANIZATION

The next three chapters of the dissertation broadly examine the Blue Blouse movement, its magazine, and some of the productions it engendered within the framework of spatial practices laid out by David Harvey in his *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Chapter Two will explore the activities of the Blue Blouse movement in the sphere of material spatial practices: the building of institutions, the physical use of spaces, and the conditions of access to products and processes. To this end, it will examine in depth the spread of Blue Blouse and the history of the organization's administration with an eye to questions of access and power.

Chapter Three examines Blue Blouse activities within the discursive sphere that Harvey labels representations of space, focusing especially of the magazine's role as a specialized spatial discourse. It discusses the ways, in which *Blue Blouse* shaped the spatial understanding of the movement, exploring how it represented the movement to itself through reports on its activities, solicitations of material like scripts and photographs, and publication of that material.

Chapter Four looks at several sketches, monologues, and songs performed by Blue Blouse troupes, analyzing how these pieces participated in the representational spatial practices of the Soviet Union. It will explore the ways, in which these productions imagine the new space that was created by the revolution and the kinds of things that should take place within it.

⁶⁵ For a good discussion of the effect that Soviet nationalities policies had on theatre, see Veidlinger, Jeffrey. *The Moscow State Yiddish Theater: Jewish Culture on the Soviet Stage*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.

Chapter Five examines in detail the activities of the Blue Blouse's affiliates and competitors in Kharkiv. The focus of the chapter will be on the role played by the organization in a regional city and the relationship of troupes on the periphery to the organizational administration in the center. Other questions of geographic practice are also at stake here, especially ones of national identity. Kharkiv was, at the time, the capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and there was a second affiliate active in the city run by the local Polish worker's club.

In the conclusion to this dissertation, I explore the end of the Blue Blouse through a close examination of three artifacts that highlight the spatial aspects of the organization's disappearance. The first, a letter from Viktor Mrozovskii to members of the movement outside of Moscow detailing the closing of the magazine and the arrest of Boris Iuzhanin, is a haunting glimpse into the experienced space of the early Stalin period, especially in the vagueness of the discussion of the "away" to which Iuzhanin had been taken. The second is Nikolai L'vov's article on the relationship between the closing of the magazine and the decline in activity of the Blue Blouse's affiliates in the provinces, which highlights the impact of the loss of that discursive place. Finally, I will discuss the program of the 1933 Olympiad of Autonomous Art held in Moscow, to which several "Blue Blouse" troupes from Germany, France, the United States and Great Britain arrived, only to find out that in the Soviet Union the movement was no more.

2.0 MATERIAL SPACE: THE BLUE BLOUSE MOVEMENT

Blue Blouse--
 For the rank and file mass
with someone
 sometime
 organized
A Blue Blouse
 All names
 Fighting for October
Blue blouse-- In a backwater district,
 no matter what
 those who opposed it said,
Blouses are at
 any given club
 of the Soviet periphery.
Shuia,
Orel,
 Omsk and Dno.
There, the red soviet plowman
 has named the living newspaper--
 "Red Shirt."
And in the heat,
 In the sand of Turkestan
Far from the Tsar's palaces
 and chambers,
Where
 In the mountains, villages
 Are found "Red Gowns."
This means that we have firmly grown
together with them.
If somewhere there is no
 "Blue Blouse,"
There is a
 "Komosomol's Hat."
A sea, though blue
 Less blue than our blouses,
 May wash around the USSR,

But the Soviet land is with workers' blouses,
with her--
With RED
With BLUE
With GRAY
--Dedicated to Red, Gray, Komosomol
Blouses, White Aprons, Red Shirts, and Socks.⁶⁶

The Blue Blouse movement rapidly spread across the Soviet Union following the formation of the first troupe at the State Institute of Journalism in 1923. By early 1928, there were 551 registered affiliates, spread from the Moldovan ASSR in the west to the Buriat-Mongol ASSR in the east, and Arkhangelsk in the north to Dushanbe in the south. Beyond this, the movement's organizers estimated that there were more than 7,000 Blue Blouse groups operating in the Soviet Union—though this number is almost certainly an exaggeration.⁶⁷

The successful growth of the movement across the expanse of the Soviet Union is even more impressive when the difficulties presented by the size and diversity of the State's territory are taken into consideration. As Jeremy Smith notes,

Russia is big. Very big indeed. Stretching halfway around the northern hemisphere, from the Polish border in the west to the Bering sea in the east, at the height of Soviet power the USSR occupied 22,402,200 square kilometers—one sixth of the world's total land surface and more than twice the size of the next

⁶⁶ «СИНЯЯ БЛУЗА»--/ Для масс низовых/ Кем-то,/ Когда-то/ организованная/ «СИНЕЮ БЛУЗОЮ»--/ Все названия--/ Октябрем завоеванное./ «СИНЯЯ БЛУЗА»-- в медвежьем углу./ Сколько б против/ ни говорили./ «БЛУЗУ» имеет/ любой клуб/ СССР-овой/ периферии./ Шуя./ Орел./ Омск и Дно./ Там./ где-- красный советский пахарь./ Живой Газете имя дано--/ «КРАСНАЯ РУБАХА»./ И где жара--/ в песках Туркестана./ Не средь царских дворцов/ и палат./ Где/ в аулах-- декхане-- крестьяне--/ Существует «КРАСНЫЙ ХАЛАТ»./ Значит-- срослись с ним крепко./ Если где нет/ «СИННИХ БЛУЗ»./ Там--/ «КОМСОМОЛЬСКАЯ КЕПКА»./ Море хоть синее./ Блузы синей/ моет вокруг СССР-а./ Но Советия с блузой рабочей./ с ней--/ С «КРАСНОЙ»./ с «СИНЕЙ»./ с «СЕРОЙ». Красным, серым, комсомольским блузам, белым фартукам, красным рубашкам, косынкам-- посвящается. Iuzhanin, Boris. "Krasnym, serym, komsomol'skim bluzam, belym fartukam, krasnym rubakham, kosynkam-- posviashchaensia." *Siniaia bluza* 71-72 (1927), 51.

⁶⁷ *Siniaia bluza* 71-72 (1927), 3.

biggest countries, Canada and China.... Nor is this the end of the story. Unlike China or Canada, Russia's length is far greater than its width—the distance from Kaliningrad to the Bering Strait exceeds 9,000 kilometers. At no time in history has any other state had to deal with such vast distances.⁶⁸

Moreover, this massive space was occupied by an exceptionally diverse group of people comprising around 150 ethnic groups speaking approximately 200 languages from a half dozen linguistic families.⁶⁹ In his discussion of “Russian space as a burden,” Sergei Medvedev evocatively outlines a number of the other peculiarities of the territory of Russia which can be extended to the Soviet Union:

Russia's territory is not just quantitatively vast, it is qualitatively infinite, amorphous[,] and contradictory Three quarters of its territory lies in the tundra or taiga, always in the grip of the permafrost Nearly all of the surrounding seas freeze over and most of the frontiers are unpopulated Russian space is a conglomeration of peripheries Elements of different and sometimes contrasting peripheries have not yet melted together into a cohesive cultural landscape, but have been rather arbitrarily combined by the state Three quarters of the population are concentrated in the European part of the country[,] which itself comprises only one quarter of the total territory Moscow is 20 times closer to the western border than the eastern one. Centers and Nuclei of the Russian space are essentially eccentric, almost on the frontier [Russia as] a

⁶⁸ Smith, Jeremy. “Introduction.” *Beyond The Limits: The Concept of Space in Russian History and Culture*. Jeremy Smith, ed. Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1999. 7-14;7. While Smith is discussing the territory of the Soviet Union after its annexation of Western Belarus and Ukraine, the Baltic Territories, and the Kaliningrad Region, the general point remains the same.

⁶⁹ For a discussion of ethnographers' attempts to catalogue and organize the ethnic diversity of the Soviet Union, see Hirsch. For a discussion of the languages of the Soviet Union, see Grenoble, Lenore A. *Language Policy in the Soviet Union*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003.

heterogeneous, diversified, paradoxical space has been, and remains, a major challenge for the authorities.⁷⁰

This chapter will map the activities of the Blue Blouse movement throughout this massive territory, focusing on what David Harvey calls ‘material spatial practices’: the building of institutions and networks, the physical use of spaces, and the conditions of access to products and processes. To this end, it will examine in depth the spread of Blue Blouse affiliates and the history of the group’s administration, with an eye to questions of access and power.

2.1 APPROPRIATION AND USE OF SPACE: THE BLUE BLOUSE IN THE BEERHALLS AND IN THE CLUBS

The first Blue Blouse troupe began as a class project at the State Institute of Journalism. When the group attracted attention with their performances at the celebration of the first anniversary of the Institute, the group received an invitation from Mosselprom, the Moscow agricultural trust, to organize productions in the cafeterias and beer halls of Moscow, and Iuzhanin accepted. Following the revolution Mosselprom had taken control of Moscow’s restaurants and it quickly began to attempt to transform the spaces—which ranged from Mosselprom Cafeteria Number 1, housed in the centrally located restaurant “Praga,” to neighborhood taverns on the city’s periphery—from sites of bourgeois consumption into sites of socialist daily life. One early attempt to add cultural value to the beer halls involved replacing performances of popular songs with concerts of classical music. But, as Osip Brik noted, “the beer drinkers demonstrated that a

⁷⁰ Medvedev, Sergei. “A General Theory of Russian Space: A Gay Science and a Rigorous Science.” *Beyond The Limits: The Concept of Space in Russian History and Culture*. Jeremy Smith, ed. Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1999. 15-47; 16-18.

beer hall is not a classroom, and while their musical taste might be elevated, the patrons were bored and drank less beer.”⁷¹

The Blue Blouse were seen as a potential solution to the difficulties presented by the “struggle of culture and beer,” because their performances were grounded in popular forms and engaged in political enlightenment (Figure 7).⁷² As Brik recalls,

The first performances of Blue Blouse in beer halls were met with confusion and with interest. It was quite unexpected that in the midst of beer, crawfish, and peas, people appeared in blue shirts, who between the performances of vulgar couplets and songs grounded in double entendres began to sing and speak on everyday and political themes.⁷³

This disjuncture was humorously commented upon by the Moscow Theatre of Satire, which performed a piece featuring a restaurant advertising: “we have fresh crawfish and blue blouse daily.”⁷⁴ But the Blue Blouse was also recognized as effective at their task—to proletarianize these sites.⁷⁵ The need to make their work entertaining in these circumstances also forced the Blue Blouse to alter their style, relying more on elements from variety theatre, physical action, and colorful costumes.⁷⁶ In some of the restaurants, they were successful enough that the atmosphere was altered to the detriment of beer sales:

In some beer halls, primarily those removed from the center, the success of these performances was so great that customers, arriving long before the beginning of

⁷¹ Brik, *Estrada* 4. Brik, a formalist literary critic, was engaged by Mosselprom to help make the entertainment at their establishments both cultural and popular.

⁷² Brik, *Estrada* 4.

⁷³ Brik, *Estrada* 4.

⁷⁴ Zolotnitskii, *Zakat* 247.

⁷⁵ Their work is praised, for example, in a discussion of performances at the restaurant “Bar” published in *Novyi zritel'*: “Protsesta restorana ‘Bar’.” *Novyi zritel'* 2.16 (1925), 8; “Vyvody iz protsesta.” *Novyi zritel'* 2.16 (1925), 9.

⁷⁶ “Zhivaia gazeta mosselprom.” *Novyi zritel'* 2.2 (1925), 17. Brik, *Estrada* 7-10.

the program, would come with their wives and children, as if it were a theatre. Bartenders complained that this was awful, because the whole family would come, occupy a table, sit there all evening and only drink one or two bottles of beer.⁷⁷



Figure 7. Advertisement for Mosselprom Cafeteria located in the restaurant, “Praga,” promising food, chess, an orchestra and a program of entertainment (and subtly highlighting the availability of beer). *Novyi zritel'* 47 (1924),

18.

In 1924, Blue Blouse received sponsorship from the Moscow Regional Council of Trade Unions (MGSPS) and began to perform frequently at workers’ clubs in Moscow.⁷⁸ By 1925 their presence at these clubs was so ubiquitous that Blue Blouse troupes would frequently be booked to perform several times an evening in different places.⁷⁹ The recognition of the Blue Blouse’s contribution to workers’ culture in Moscow was such that they were invited to give a performance celebrating the first anniversary of their existence in the Columned Hall of

⁷⁷ Brik, *Estrada* 6.

⁷⁸ For an excellent discussion of Moscow’s workers’ clubs, see and Hatch, John Brinley. *The Formation of Working Class Cultural Institutions During NEP: The Workers' Club Movement in Moscow 1921-1923*. The Carl Beck Papers 806. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Center for Russian and East European Studies, 1990. and Hatch, John. “Hangouts and Hangovers: State, Class and Culture in Moscow’s Workers’ Club Movement, 1925-1928.” *Russian Review* 53.1 (1994) 97-117.

⁷⁹ TsGAMO f.180, op. 1 d. 1554 l. 12.

Moscow's House of Trade Unions, a venue that could be considered the very heart of Soviet Trade Union Life.⁸⁰ The association with the MGSPS also allowed the group to begin publication of their magazine, *Blue Blouse*. The magazine was published by the council's imprint, *trud i kniga*, and was the vehicle by which the Blue Blouse's influence began to spread beyond the confines of Moscow.⁸¹

Later in 1924, shortly after the publication of the initial issue of *Blue Blouse*, the Moscow Blue Blouse troupe undertook the first of their tours. These tours became more frequent as the Moscow organization grew, and by 1926 at least two of their troupes were on tour at any given time.⁸² The touring troupes often performed several shows a day at different factories and workers' clubs, and were seen by hundreds of thousands of spectators. A critic who saw an early performance by the Moscow Blue Blouse in Samara describes the warm reception of the troupe by an audience of workers: "We showed the Blue Blouse in workers' clubs. In all, more than 2,000 workers were served If you study the outward mood of the auditorium, you will note a storm of applause, cries of approval from the seats, and joyous, friendly laughter during the action."⁸³

These tours would regularly involve long stands performing at a number of factories and clubs in a single city. In 1930, for example, one of the professional troupes, the "industrial

⁸⁰ The symbolic value of the Columned Hall is hard to understate: a few months before the Blue Blouse anniversary performance, Lenin's wake was held in the Hall. Later, during the purges of the 1930s, show trials were staged there in order to benefit from its aura.

⁸¹ Iuzhanin, "Piat'" 51. Uvarova *Estradnyi teatr* 96.

⁸² The location of the troupes was regularly printed in the announcements occupying the bottom of the table of contents and back cover of *Blue Blouse*. As a result, we know, for example, that in July 1927 the "Model" troupe was performing in the Far East, while the "Estrada-Vaudeville" troupe was performing in the central industrial region. *Siniaia bluza* 61-62 (1927), i.

⁸³ N. Enkha. "Provintsiia o 'Sinei Bluze'." *Rabochii zritel'* 32-33 (1924), 27-28. Enkha goes on to suggest that the spectators enjoyed the performances for the wrong reasons: "In sum, above all worker reviews of Blue Blouse directed their attention to the outward form, the very methods of staging. It seems to us that this says a great deal about the meaning of the form of theatrical work in workers' clubs."

collective,” performed 50 shows over the course of one month in Zlatoust, an industrial city in the Ural mountains.⁸⁴ This not only provided an enormous number of workers with an opportunity to see a professional Blue Blouse troupe perform (Zlatoust had 3 registered Blue Blouse collectives of its own), but allowed the troupe to establish a presence in the city. In a letter praising M. Arsh, the troupe’s leader, one factory’s cultural director stressed this connection, noting:

Among factory workers, Arsh showed himself to be an excellent organizer. Arsh doesn’t merely work according to requests, but takes initiative himself, climbing through the workshops arming himself for his labor. Arsh is an excellent comrade. The whole factory quickly learned to recognize him and he spectacularly carried out every aspect of his work.⁸⁵

These tours, in combination with the publication of *Blue Blouse* also helped to build the Blue Blouse movement. Tour stops frequently resulted either in the formation of new troupes or a strengthening of the relationships between local Blue Blouse troupes and the Moscow center. In 1924, for example, a Blue Blouse collective performed a two week stand at the Gus'-Khrustal'nyi factory in the Vladimir region.⁸⁶ The Factory’s club later registered two troupes with the organization.⁸⁷ A 1925 account of the arrival of the Blue Blouse in the Ukrainian city, Kamenets-Podol'ski contrasts the dismal state of culture in the town before the troupe arrived with the excitement offered by their performance:

On the first day of the Blue Blouse performances in the workers’ club, the hall was full. Everyone was a union member. With surprise and pleasure, many of us,

⁸⁴ GTsTM f.627 ed.xr.1 l.20.

⁸⁵ GTsTM f.627 ed.xr.1 l.16.

⁸⁶ “Khronika.” *Novyi zritel'* 1.38 (1924), 16.

⁸⁷ Numbers 470 and 490. *Siniaia bluza* 73 (1928); *Siniaia bluza* 74 (1928).

mouths agape, listened to the presentations of the Blouses, and during the small intermissions stopped our heads from spinning to exclaim, “That wasn’t a pound of raisins That was real proletarian art!”⁸⁸

The performance made such an impression on the spectators that they immediately decided to organize their own Blue Blouse troupe at the Central Workers’ Club.⁸⁹ Similarly, a 1926 performance in Kyiv convinced the members of one of the city’s already existing living newspapers that: “The Blue Blouse has embarked on a new path of theatre and everyday satire, the success of which suggests that this path is correct.” As a result, the Kyiv Central Living Newspaper decided to “rebuild itself along Blue Blouse lines.”⁹⁰

These tours also reinforced, and were reinforced by, the presence of local Blue Blouse troupes in the places that the traveling troupes visited. In 1925, the Blue Blouse performed in Viatka on two separate tours (the first by the “demonstrative collective,” the second by the “industrial collective”) that “both left good impressions and were successful in Viatka, which [was] completely deserved” (Figure 8).⁹¹ The second performance was reviewed by A. Puni, a member of the Viatka Blue Blouse collective, which was, itself, preparing its 8th performance.⁹² The performances gave Puni the opportunity to learn from the successes and shortcomings of the Moscow professionals, reminding him, for example, of the dangers of “slowness” in performance.⁹³

⁸⁸ Beliaev, V. “Siniaia Bluza v Kamenets-Podol'ske.” *Rabochii klub*. 5 (1925), 86.

⁸⁹ Beliaev, 86.

⁹⁰ Bim. “Teatr Satiry: Siniaia Bluza.” *Teatr- Muzyka- Kino* 9 (1926), 6.

⁹¹ Puni, A. “Moskovskaia ‘Siniaia Bluza’.” *Teatr- ezhenedel'naia programma* 4-5 (1925), 5.

⁹² Puni, 5; “Viatskaia ‘Siniaia Bluza’.” *Teatr- ezhenedel'naia programma* 3 (1925), 8.

⁹³ Puni, 5.



Figure 8. Advertisement for a performance by the Moscow Blue Blouse at the “Coliseum” cinema in Viatka. *Teatr-ezhenedel'naia programma* 3 (1925), 9.

The performances of both the touring professionals from Moscow and of local amateur troupes relied heavily upon the infrastructure provided by the workers’ clubs that were being established across the Soviet Union during the early days of Bolshevik power. As historian John Hatch argues, an estrangement between Russian workers and the party and state that claimed to represent them was one of the most important results of the post-revolutionary civil war (approximately 1918-1922)—a result that left the industrial working class “exhausted by years of sacrifice and declining living standards and working conditions [and] scattered by the necessities and dislocations of war.”⁹⁴ In an attempt to heal this breach, party and union elites actively supported the workers’ club movement (which began following the 1905 revolution). They hoped this would accommodate workers’ demands for leisure activities, help provide them with access to cultural events, and guide their political development, better integrating them into the state.⁹⁵ By 1925 there were 3,417 workers’ clubs in the Soviet Union, including 450 in the Moscow region alone.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Hatch, *Formation* 1.

⁹⁵ Hatch, *Formation* 1-4.

⁹⁶ Nosovskii, E. “O klubnom stroitel'stve.” *Klub* 3-4 (1928), 58-67, 59. Hatch, “Hangouts” 98. The clubs outside of Moscow may have played an even more significant role in the lives of workers. For a discussion of the role of workers clubs in the construction of Kyrgyz culture, for example, see Igmen, Ali F. “Building Soviet Central Asia, 1920-1939: Kyrgyz Houses of Culture and Self-Fashioning Kyrgyznes.” Diss. University of Washington, 2004.

Clubs offered a variety of activities to their members. They arranged film screenings, concerts, theatrical performances by professional troupes, excursions to cultural sites, and nature outings.⁹⁷ Outside major cities, clubs often functioned as the primary site of cultural activity and entertainment. In 1925, for example, they made up 75 percent of the Soviet Union's cinema network.⁹⁸ But the most important form of activity that they organized was study circles (*kruzhki*) devoted to a variety of topics, including political education, music, art, chess, radio, literacy, and theatre.⁹⁹ Study circles were very popular, with about two-thirds of club members belonging to one or more.¹⁰⁰ According to a 1924 survey, by far the most popular circles were devoted to "political literacy," a necessary tool for social advancement. Drama circles (no distinction was made between living newspaper circles and those devoted to traditional drama) were the second most popular activity in Moscow clubs.¹⁰¹ The majority of non-professional Blue Blouse troupes were organized as club study circles, with workers selecting that form of activity over several other options.¹⁰²

Workers' clubs were operated by a variety of organizations. The majority were attached to specific factories, while others were operated by trade unions or inter-union organizations serving a specific territory or ethnic minority. The majority of club members were manual workers. The average club member was also quite young: young people (under the age of 23)

⁹⁷ For a statistical breakdown of the events organized by Moscow's clubs in 1925 and 1926, see Hatch "Hangouts" 106.

⁹⁸ Hatch, "Hangouts" 110.

⁹⁹ At the "Tomskii" foodworkers' union club in Dnepropetrovsk, for example, there were nine circles: music, theatre (one circle each for speakers of Russian, Ukrainian, and Yiddish), chess, sports, library work, friends of the club, and the Blue Blouse troupe. Vasin, V. "Ot podvala k zhizni: Klub pishchevikov im. Tomskogo." *Kul'trabotnik* 1 (1927), 34-35, 35.

¹⁰⁰ Hatch, "Hangouts" 104.

¹⁰¹ There were 1201 circles devoted to political literacy and 463 devoted to drama. Music ranked third with 365 circles. Moskovskii Gubernskii Sovet Professional'nikh Soiuzov. *Kul'turno-prosvetitel'naia rabota Moskovskikh professional'nikh soiuzov*. Moskva: Trud i kniga, 1925: 22-27.

¹⁰² Hatch observes that "while performing-arts and physical-culture circles experienced dynamic growth during the period under study [1925-1928-- the peak of Blue Blouse activity], others especially political, trade-union, remedial education, and production circles, stagnated or declined." "Hangouts" 105.

made up 44% of Moscow's total club membership, and as much as 74% of the membership at some clubs.¹⁰³ Young people were also much more likely to be involved in clubs activities like Blue Blouse troupes than their older colleagues (at one factory 95% of the participants in performing arts circles were youths).¹⁰⁴ There were important gender discrepancies as well: only a third of the members of Moscow's clubs were women, and young women were much more likely to join clubs than their adult counterparts.¹⁰⁵

Following a substantial reduction in subsidies from the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (VTsSPS) in 1922, clubs became largely self-financing institutions.¹⁰⁶ While a portion of their operating budget was provided by the sponsoring factory or trade union, clubs had to finance their operations primarily through the collection of dues and the sale of tickets.¹⁰⁷ As a result of this economic imperative, club programming often neglected politically topical works in favor of light entertainment that could do well at the box office—referred to disparagingly as “*khaltura*.” Club activists and political elites alike saw this work as a serious problem. In 1922, for example, a conference organized by the Moscow regional council of political education (Mosgubpolitprosvet) issued a call to arms against “the prevailing abstractness of artistic-theatrical work in clubs.”¹⁰⁸ Many saw professional Blue Blouse troupes as a solution to this problem because they combined political relevance with the ability to draw large audiences (and, therefore, to generate a politically responsible profit for the club).¹⁰⁹ For

¹⁰³ Hatch, “Hangouts” 100.

¹⁰⁴ Hatch, “Hangouts” 104.

¹⁰⁵ Hatch, “Hangouts” 101.

¹⁰⁶ Hatch, *Formation*, 15.

¹⁰⁷ In 1923 the previously widespread practice of requiring employees of a factory or members of a union to “join” the club was formally forbidden, further limiting the financial resources of clubs. Hatch, *Formation* 17.

¹⁰⁸ Cited in Hatch, *Formation* 23.

¹⁰⁹ In a discussion of activity at Moscow clubs, for example, G. Kochenova, remarks on the drastic difference in attendance between a Blue Blouse performance (350 people) and an agit-trial (150 people). “Kudozhstvennaia rabota v 4-x Moskovskikh klubakh.” *Klub* 1 (1926), 77.

some club activists, though, this was not enough. Objecting alternately to the Blue Blouse's later incorporation of variety theatre techniques ("Can you really still find someone so idiotic that they still call the Blue Blouse a 'living newspaper'?") and to the superficiality of their propaganda, critics of the group insisted that the Blue Blouse was a false (if deviously appealing) solution to the problem of *khaltura*.¹¹⁰

Hiring one of the professional Blue Blouse troupes was a noteworthy expense, and clubs demanded from these troupes not only good box office returns, but also an excellent show.¹¹¹ In 1925, for example, Kniazev, the director of the "Proletarian Forge" workers' club in Moscow, wrote a letter to the MGSPS complaining about a performance by one of the professional Blue Blouse troupes. Kniazev wrote that he had arranged for an 8:00 performance on 31 July 1925 and that the Blue Blouse had agreed to perform twelve sketches, including "Pugachev, Razin, and the Decembrists," "Village life, old and new," and the ever-topical "Hooligans." When the 31st finally rolled around, the Blue Blouse troupe arrived late, beginning their performance at 8:15, and promptly ended the performance after an hour, despite having only performed six sketches. Moreover, instead of all but two of the agreed upon sketches, the Blue Blouse performed the pieces "Physical culture," "In general order," and "The struggle for quality in production." Worse still, the performers were low on energy, which was due, they admitted, to the fact that this was their third performance that day. Kniazev continued: "the workers of our factory were left terribly unsatisfied by this performance of the Blue Blouse. For our 75 rubles they gave so little to the workers, who were supposed to put up with the fact that they got such

¹¹⁰ Ispolnev, I. "Shumim, bratets, shumim." *Klub* 6 (1925) 75. Lugovskoi, V. "Formy khudozhestvennoi raboty v klube." *Klub* 12 (1926), 22.

¹¹¹ In her study of artistic celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the October Revolution, Susan Corbesero notes that several clubs decided that they could not afford the Blue Blouse's fees. *The Anniversaries of the October Revolution, 1918-1927: Politics and Imagery*. Diss. University of Pittsburgh, 2005. 165-66.

porridge.” He concluded by requesting that the MGSPS take appropriate measures to ensure that similarly worthless events did not occur in the future.¹¹² This complaint eventually resulted in a meeting between the leadership of the Blue Blouse and the cultural section of the MGSPS about measures that could be taken to improve the quality of Blue Blouse performances.¹¹³

Resulting both from the expense of hiring professional performers, and workers’ clubs’ emphasis on providing an outlet for workers’ creative expression through study circles, amateur Blue Blouse circles were the movement’s most visible presence at Soviet workers’ clubs. The editors of *Blue Blouse* offered a great deal of advice in their columns to workers hoping to form a Blue Blouse circle: “The composition of a Blue Blouse collective should be 12 to 20 people. There should be two to three times as many men as women. The collective should have members with various strengths: singing, physical culture, speech, and acting.”¹¹⁴ The group should be led by a director who “is in possession of the all-seeing eyes of a reporter,” partially in order to avert “fights and arguments.”¹¹⁵ Some of these directors were, of course, better than others. A report on the cultural work done at the club of the “Red Profintern” factory in Ekaterinoslav, for example, notes: “The Blue Blouse circle is in operation, but the director doesn’t attend the meetings and the guys can’t get it together.”¹¹⁶ The editors of *Blue Blouse* also demanded a level of commitment from participants in club circles: “There is never a *souffleur* in Blue Blouse performances. Learn all of your lines by heart.”¹¹⁷

¹¹² TsGAMO f.180, op. 1 d. 1554 l. 12.

¹¹³ The material related to this meeting is held in TSGAMO f.180, op. 1 d. 1554 ll. 1-14.

¹¹⁴ “Prostye sovety uchastnikam sinebluzoi gazety.” *Siniaia bluza* 18 (1925). 3-5; 3. Published in translation as: “Blue Blouse: Simple advice to participants.” *Twentieth Century Theatre: A Sourcebook*. Richard Drain, ed. London: Routledge, 1995, 181-183.

¹¹⁵ “Chtob rabotat' bez skolki i ssory,-- nuzhny sinebluznye rezhissery.” *Siniaia bluza* 16 (1925). 3-5.

¹¹⁶ Egor. “Kultrabotka.” *Metallist* 24 (1926). 13.

¹¹⁷ “Prostye sovety uchastnikam sinebluzoi gazety.” *Siniaia bluza* 18 (1925). 3-5; 5.

The level of activity and quality of performances varied widely between Blue Blouse circles. A club in Kashin (in the Tver' region) built their first performance entirely from material published in *Blue Blouse*, but this practice seems to be the exception rather than the rule.¹¹⁸ At the “Krupskaia” club in Stalingrad, for example, the living newspaper “Blium” began, “From the example of the Blue Blouse, and not only from their example—half of our first issue was made up from their material.” Blium’s performances were dedicated to specific campaigns and appeared “periodically.” But they drifted away from the Blue Blouse because their material was “too agitational.” Following this change, they began to rely entirely on locally crafted material dealing with local themes.¹¹⁹ The frequency of performances varied widely as well. Most groups rehearsed for at least a month between performances. One participant from Slobodka lamented that his workers’ club began to become skeptical of its group’s “long, boring” rehearsals, asking “what’s with your newspaper—you can’t even put up a wall newspaper?” (the writer countered that, in the end, their effort was justified by “lengthy applause”).¹²⁰ Other groups were much more prolific in their activity. A participant in the Blue Blouse circle at the “10th anniversary of the October Revolution” at the Railworkers’ club in Dnepropetrovsk bragged that “now there is not a single club event at which the Blue Blouse doesn’t perform We have produced 62 sketches. Of those 90% have only been shown to the workers one time.”¹²¹ He credits their output to the work ethic instilled by the participation of several veterans of the Red Army in their circle.

The dual nature of the Blue Blouse movement—made up of professional troupes, on the one hand, and do-it-yourself circles, on the other—led to some controversy among club activists.

¹¹⁸ Their program is printed in “Kak podaiut programmy sinebluzniki g. Kashina.” *Siniiaia bluza* 34 (1926). 61.

¹¹⁹ Sinodov, A. “Nash opyt v rabote s zhivoi gazetoi.” *Klub* 7 (1925). 81-83.

¹²⁰ A. Iarmal'. “Zhivaia Gazeta.” *Rabochii klub* 11-12 (1925). 85.

¹²¹ Tseitn. “Dosiagnennia nashoi ‘synoi bluzy.’” *Kul'trobitnik* 4 (1928). 28.

Many were devoted to the idea of the club as the site of a new proletarian culture, and they viewed the professional side of Blue Blouse activity as a dangerous influence on workers. In one 1926 review of the Blue Blouse's work, for example, the Komsomol activist S. Korev argued that the group had abandoned the living newspaper in both form and substance, and suggested that this was the unhappy result of the group's professional status:

1) The Blue Blouse has taken the position of an *Estrada* collective, 2) It has become, of course, a professional organization, 3) They have abandoned the principle of agitation for the everyday, 4) In terms of quality, they promise to get better, but their concrete path to improvement has only concerned music.¹²²

Because of these failings, Korev insisted that the Blue Blouse "has begun a transformation into the old bourgeois theatre." This transformation brought amateur Blue Blouse circles under suspicion as well: "as a whole, Blue Blouse is not and never has been an appropriate club form in any way." Korev concluded by calling on local organs of political enlightenment to "combat the remaining elements of Blue Blouse work."¹²³

The Blue Blouse responded periodically to this kind of criticism. In a 1925 article, "Theatrical newspapers, professional and club," for example, the editors of *Blue Blouse* insisted:

[To] tell professional living newspapers that their role is only to do their business and leave is at the very least the narrow opinion of club fanatics Further, [to claim that] "professional living newspapers are dangerous to workers clubs" is how to kill the do-it-yourselfness of the circle participants [*kruzhkovtsy*].

This is due, they argued, to the fact that the professional and do-it-yourself living newspapers perform different tasks. In the editors' view, do-it-yourself living newspapers should concern

¹²² Korev, S. "'Siniaia bluza' na perelome" *Klub* 3 (1926). 54-59.

¹²³ Korev, S. "'Siniaia bluza' na perelome" *Klub* 3 (1926). 54-59.

themselves above all with the development of their participants: “the healthy creative instinct—to act—should not be suppressed.” In addition, do-it-yourself performances should cater to the specific needs of their audiences: “The more specifically they grasp the interests and needs of a given auditorium, the more successful a club’s living newspaper will be.” Professional living newspapers, by contrast, must use the high quality of their actors and texts to “bring problems to attention and interest the audience in them. The success of professional living newspapers depends on the mastery of their performers and their well-written texts.” The editors concluded that these two paths cannot be “parallel lines without any points of intersection,” because the technical devices developed by the professional living newspapers “cannot but be of interest and use to club members in living newspapers.” The essay ended with a statement of their commitment to the idea that “living newspapers should serve the wide mass of circle participants” and that it is the duty of clubs to remain vigilant against “*khaltura* and bohemian bourgeois theatre.”¹²⁴

The intensity of the arguments about the professional nature of the Blue Blouse’s organizational center and the possibility that professional troupes were usurping the space of the workers’ clubs, which was usually occupied by non-professionals in do-it-yourself circles, portrays the distinction between professional and non-professional as being much more clear cut than it actually was. Iuzhanin and several other core members of the professional center, after all, began as a do-it-yourself circle performing at the Institute of Journalism. Likewise, many members of non-professional troupes used do-it-yourself Blue Blouse circles to launch professional careers. To name just one example, several members of “Rifle,” the Blue Blouse

¹²⁴ “Teatralizovannaia gazeta-- profakterskaia i klubnaia.” *Siniaia bluza* 13 (1925). 3-5.

circle in Izhevsk, capital of the Udmurt ASSR, moved to the professional theatre once one was finally established in that city in 1931.¹²⁵

2.2 ACCESSIBILITY AND DISTANCIATION: COVERING ONE SIXTH OF THE EARTH

As the Blue Blouse movement grew, its performances occupied an ever-increasing percentage of the performance spaces—traditional and otherwise—of the new Soviet Union. The spatial reach of the Blue Blouse, however, varied depending on the level of access local clubs had to the central movement. Their level of access was shaped by the geographic and cultural peculiarities of the Soviet Union. While thousands of living newspapers participated in the Blue Blouse movement in one form or another, the analysis in this section will be based on the 551 troupes that registered with *Blue Blouse* from 1927 to 1928 (Figures 9 and 10; see Appendix A for a complete list of registered troupes, organized by administrative territory).

¹²⁵ I.D. Semenov, V.V. Kilina, I.I. Kudriashov, and E.A. Vishnevskaja became professional actors. Another troupe member, B.I. Chernik became the head of Izhevsk's Russian People's Theatre. Lozhkin, V. V. *Teatral'noe iskusstvo Udmurtii*. Izhevsk: Udmurtskii institut istorii, iazyka i literatury, 1994. 31.

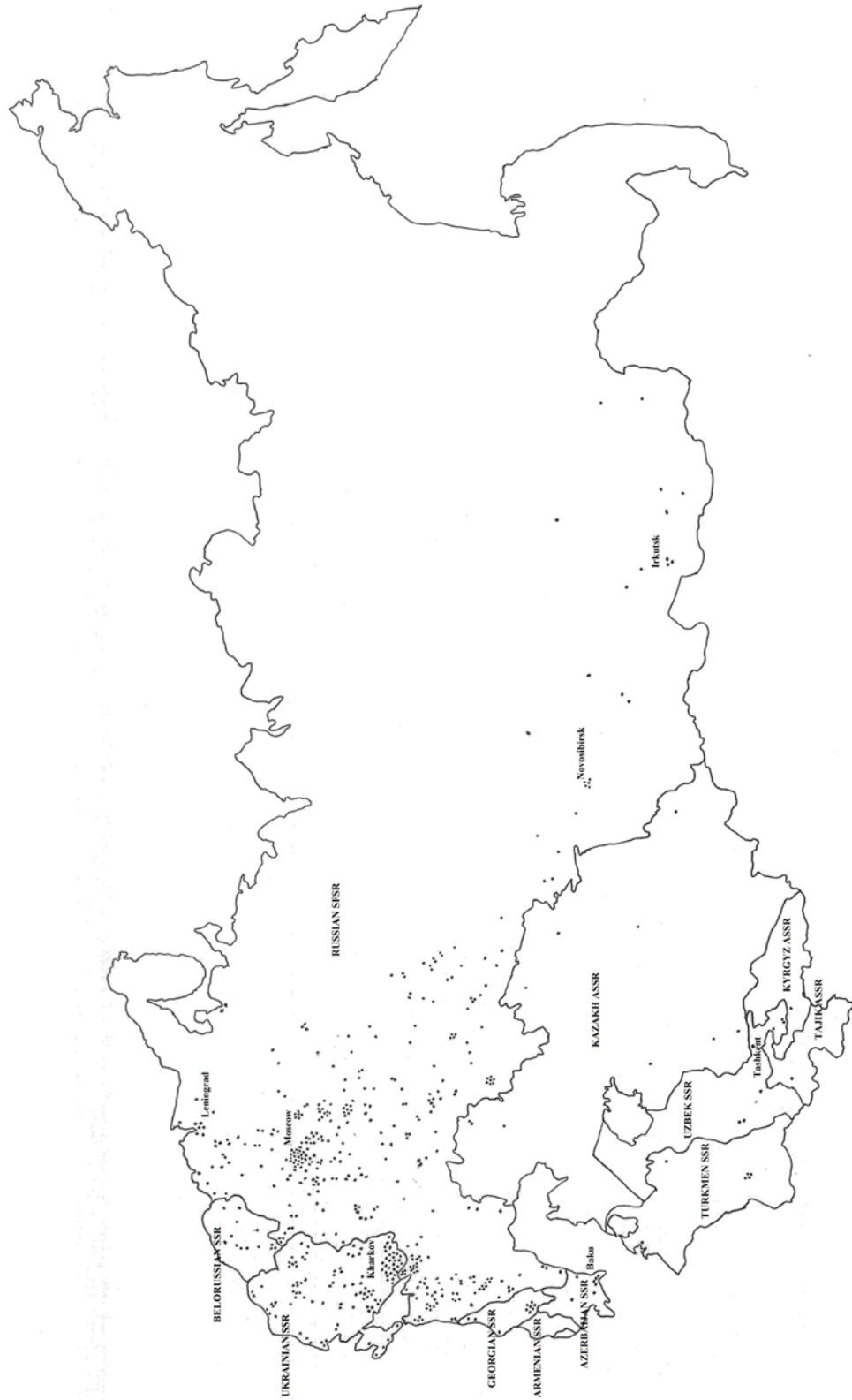


Figure 9. Map of registered Blue Blouse troupes.



Figure 10. Map of registered Blue Blouse troupes located west of the Ural mountains.

One of the most striking characteristics of the distribution of registered Blue Blouse troupes is their relatively even distribution across southwestern Russia and their complete absence in the northeastern two-thirds of the Soviet Union. This distribution pattern reflects quite closely the pattern of population distribution in Russia. As Sergei Medvedev points out in his discussion of the geographic peculiarities of Russia: “Three-quarters of the population are concentrated in the European [western] part of the country which itself comprises only one quarter of the total territory. In the other three quarters of the territory, there lives only one quarter of the population.”¹²⁶ One of the driving factors behind this incredible imbalance is the “savage nature” of the sparsely populated regions.¹²⁷ These climatic constraints are made visible in the distribution of Blue Blouse troupes. Apart from a few groups in the Leningrad and Arkhangel'sk regions in northwestern Russia, there were no registered Blue Blouse groups above 60 degrees longitude.

The unevenness of the distribution of the Soviet Union’s population exacerbated traditional constraints on access to power, resources and culture. One important limiting factor is the cost of transportation. As already noted, Moscow is much closer to the western border than to the eastern one, while development East of the Ural mountains is concentrated almost exclusively along the Trans-Siberian Railway¹²⁸ These transportation constraints clearly shaped the Blue Blouse movement as well: east of the Urals, most of the Russian Blue Blouse troupes were clearly stretched out in a single line following the path of the railway. The desire to build an egalitarian Soviet space, in which every center was a periphery and every periphery a center—a sentiment expressed in the Blue Blouse slogan, “From Georgia to Kamchatka, Blue

¹²⁶ Medvedev 17.

¹²⁷ Medvedev 16.

¹²⁸ Medvedev 17-18.

Blouse”—was thwarted by this geographical inequality. No Kamchatkan troupe ever registered with the Blue Blouse.

Considering these geographic constraints, the wide distribution of Blue Blouse troupes is quite remarkable. The largest concentration was in and around Moscow (in addition to the numerous professional troupes, there were 19 registered do-it-yourself troupes operating in the city of Moscow and another 16 operating in the Moscow Province). There were also large concentrations of registered troupes in the Donbas mining region in Eastern Ukraine and the Northern Caucasus.¹²⁹ Beyond these pockets of heavy concentration, the distribution of the movement was quite broad as well. There was at least one Blue Blouse troupe registered in the provincial capital of every administrative unit from the Ural territories westward except for Perm'.¹³⁰ In addition to this broad distribution across major cities, there was also a great deal of Blue Blouse activity in smaller cities and towns. For example, Nezhin, a small city in the Chernihiv province in Ukraine, boasted five registered Blue Blouse troupes: “Komsomol” at the Railworkers’ Union, “Start” at the Council for Physical Culture, “Grey Blouse” at the “Lenin” Union Club, “Blue Blouse” at the Institute for Popular Education, and “Composer’s Stick” at the Committee of Print Workers.

Another major factor governing access to the Blue Blouse movement was the distance (both geographical and metaphorical) between the cities and the countryside. While most of the Soviet population lived in rural areas at the time of the Blue Blouse movement’s founding, the vast majority of Blue Blouse troupes were based in cities and towns. In 1924 the MGSPS

¹²⁹ There were 24 troupes registered in the Donetsk and Lugansk provinces in the Donbas region. There were a total of 83 registered troupes in the Don, Kransodar, and Stavropol provinces and the Abkhazia, Dagestan, Chechnya, Cherkessia, and North Ossetia Autonomous Republics and Regions in the northern Caucasus.

¹³⁰ The split with the “Perm’ opposition” discussed in Chapter 3 occurred before the registration of Blue Blouse troupes began.

attempted to address this situation by forming “Union,” (*Smychka*) a Blue Blouse group headed by director Aleksandr Macheret, which was tasked with performing for rural audiences inside Moscow province.¹³¹ While the correspondence published in *Blue Blouse* shows that some local troupes also took it upon themselves to perform for villages in their region, a major difference in access to the movement and its products remained.¹³²

In addition to the difficulties of transportation and the urban/rural divide, a third spatial factor influencing access to the Blue Blouse movement was the division between the Soviet Union’s Russian heartland and its semi-autonomous national republics.¹³³ The vast majority of Blue Blouse troupes were located inside Russia. Nevertheless, the movement also had a significant presence in a number of the USSR’s National Republics. In the Transcaucasian Republics, for example, there were eight registered troupes in the Georgian SSR (seven of which were in Tbilisi, the Republic’s capital) and seven in the Azerbaijan SSR (four in Baku). There were also troupes registered in all five of the Central Asian Republics. The largest concentration of Blue Blouse activity outside of Russia was in the Ukrainian SSR, where there were 101 registered troupes operating, including two in Kharkiv, the Ukrainian capital at the time, four in Kyiv, and three in Odessa. Many of the national republics within the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) had registered Blue Blouse troupes as well, including the Abkhazian (2 troupes), Bashkir (8, four of which were in Ufa), Buryiat-Mongol (3), Chuvash (1), Crimean

¹³¹ The importance of a “*smychka*” or union between peasants and workers was a central concept in Soviet ideology during the 1920s. The formation of the troupe “Smychka” was announced in *Novyi zritel’* 36 (1924), 14.

¹³² For an example of local troupes performing for nearby villages see “Na mestakh.” *Siniia bluza* 46 (1926): 53. Also, see Chapter 3.

¹³³ The 1922 Treaty on the Creation of the USSR laid the groundwork for the administrative division of the Soviet Union into national units which had some cultural autonomy. The largest national territories were given the title of Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) and were, in principle, structurally equivalent to Russia. Smaller national territories as well as those located within the borders of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic were granted the titles of Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) or Autonomous Region (AO), and were structurally equivalent to provinces, but were expected to dedicate significant resources to the promotion of national cultural autonomy.

(5), Dagestan (3), Moldavian (3), Mordovian (1), Tatar (5), and Volga German (2) ASSRs; and the Chechen (1), Cherkess (1), Khakassk (2), Mari (2), and North Ossetian (5) Autonomous Regions. While there were no troupes registered in the Armenian SSR and several of the ASSRs and Autonomous Regions in the Russian SFSR, the Blue Blouse movement seems to have been remarkably successful at crossing the Soviet Union's ethno-national boundaries.

These territories formed the cornerstone of the Soviet Union's nationality policy, through which the Bolsheviks hoped to curtail nationalism as a competing ideology by offering the national minorities of the former Russian empire the forms of a nation (the official use of a language, the protection of a national culture, leaders selected from the national population) but without political sovereignty.¹³⁴ The spread of the Blue Blouse to the national territories was seen at the time as a part of this nationality policy, though in retrospect this might seem an odd. After all, the movement originated in and was guided from Moscow, so it was hardly an obvious choice for a form of "national culture." There were two important aspects of Soviet nationality policy that lessened this difficulty, however. The first was *korenizatsiia* (nativization), a policy that involved prioritizing local and indigenous cultural production.¹³⁵ The adaptation of Blue Blouse work to local circumstances fit into this paradigm, as it also entailed an adaptation to national circumstances. One collective in Tashkent in the Uzbek SSR, for example, grounded the visual aspect of their skit, "Revolution in the Harem," in the traditional costume of Uzbekistan, simultaneously localizing and nationalizing the theatrical form (Figure 11).¹³⁶ The Bolshevik concept of nation, importantly, was grounded not only in the notion of cultural difference, but in a principle of developmental difference as well. One of the goals of the policy

¹³⁴ As Terry Martin notes, "national republics were granted no more powers than Russian provinces." 13.

¹³⁵ Martin 10-11, 21-22.

¹³⁶ National costume was one of the most fetishized of Soviet national forms and frequently served as the dominant visual signifier of nationality.

was to help “backwards” nations catch up to “modernized” ones like Russia, because the importance of national identity (and the possibility of national oppression) would only disappear when these developmental differences were eliminated.¹³⁷ Thus, the Blue Blouse, as an aggressively modernist form, also allowed participants in national republics to perform their own modernization. The performers in Tashkent’s Pioneer Blue Blouse troupe, for example, as participants in both the Blue Blouse and Pioneer movements, were in the vanguards of state-wide activities, culturally and politically (Figure 12).



Figure 11. The Tashkent Blue Blouse Collective staging “Revolution in the Harem.” *Siniaia bluza* 71-72 (1927): 69.

¹³⁷ Martin 5-6. He notes that during the Cultural Revolution (1928-1932) it became common to “boast that in the far north, the thousand-year process of national formation had been telescoped into a mere decade” (6). Francine Hirsh compellingly argues for the Eurocentrism of the Soviet understanding of nation, describing Soviet ethnographers’ insistence that ‘true nations’ should share a language and ethnicity, and declaring a number of terms used to self-describe national identity in Central Asia illegitimate.,184.



Figure 12. The Tashkent Pioneer Living Newspaper. *Siniaia bluza* 71-72 (1927): 61.

Language served as another major limitation on access to the Blue Blouse movement. The Soviet Union was divided into 40 ethno-national territories in the 1920s, within which 150-200 languages were spoken.¹³⁸ The Moscow Blue Blouse published and performed material only in Russian, but local groups frequently translated it into their own languages.¹³⁹ These translations were, importantly, not only into the titular languages of national republics, but often into minority languages as well. The “Zila Bluze” in Leningrad, for example, performed in Latvian, and in Kazan', the capital of the Tatar ASSR, there was a Jewish Blue Blouse group that performed in Yiddish.¹⁴⁰ Despite the activity of these do-it-yourself translators, however, the overwhelming majority of Blue Blouse troupes performed in Russian, and the existence of this

¹³⁸ These languages, moreover, are enormously varied and include languages in the Slavic, Baltic, Caucasian, Finno-Ugric, Indo-Iranian, Turkic, and Tungus families. The wide range of estimations of the number of languages in the Soviet Union is due to disagreements (some ideologically motivated) about which forms are languages and which are dialects. For more on the linguistic composition of the Soviet Union, as well as a history of Soviet language policy, see Grenoble.

¹³⁹ For more on the translation of Blue Blouse material, see Chapter 5.

¹⁴⁰ *Siniaia bluza* 74 (1928) 65; *Siniaia bluza* 71-72 (1927) 79. For an image of Kazan's Jewish Blue Blouse troupe, see Chapter 3, figure 15.

language barrier must have provided considerable discouragement to some would-be Blue Blouseniks.

One project imagined by the Blue Blouse organizers that could have considerably increased access to their work was never realized. In 1925 Boris Iuzhanin, Aleksandr Macheret, and Sergei Iutkevich wrote a proposal to the Proletkino film studio for a Blue Blouse “Cinema Magazine” (*kino-zhurnal*).¹⁴¹ This project, they argued, would put the experience of the Blue Blouse, which had won over “the proletarian auditorium with their portability, lightness, plasticity, popular simplicity, and clear conclusions,” at the service of the Soviet film industry, which “up to this moment has followed a path of nativizing the devices that have circulated in the conditions of the West”: conditions that were alien to the Soviet population.¹⁴² The transfer of Blue Blouse devices to the screen would, they argued, allow for the development of Soviet cinema by linking it with an art form that had grown out of the revolution, while putting the special ability of cinema to present “naked photographic facts” in the hands of artists already specialized at giving facts political force.¹⁴³ Their proposal then outlines a potential “Cinema Magazine” in a way that makes clear that, rather than being a spectacle film documenting a Blue Blouse performance, it would be a cinematic transformation of the Blue Blouse’s work, incorporating montage, comic presentations of local and international news, and even animation. Nothing ever came of the proposal.¹⁴⁴ Had it been accepted, however, it could have radically

¹⁴¹ Macheret and Iutkevich would both go on to have long and successful careers as film directors and educators. Iutkevich’s copy of the proposal is located at RGALI f.3070 op.1 d.5 ll.1-9. The copy of the proposal located in Proletkino’s archive has been published with commentary: Kir’iakevich, Liudmila Ivanovna. “‘Siniaia bluza’ v ‘proletarskom kino.’” *Vestnik arkhivista* 3-4 (2003): 293-205.

¹⁴² RGALI f.3070 op.1 d.5 l.1-2.

¹⁴³ RGALI f.3070 op.1 d.5 l. 4. The proposal’s author’s pretention to native authenticity and purity from western influence is dropped in their discussion of their work, which suggests that their “Cinema *raek*” would be built along the lines of “American comedy of the Chaplin type.” RGALI f.3070 op.1 d.5 l.8.

¹⁴⁴ I have not come across any documentation of Proletkino’s response to the proposal, nor has anyone I have spoken to. As a result, while the Blue Blouse cinema journal was never produced, it is not entirely clear why not.

changed the spatial dynamics of the Blue Blouse movement, taking advantage of the Soviet Union's "cinemafication" campaign to massively increase access to the Moscow professionals' work, while concentrating control over the product in the hands of a few filmmakers.¹⁴⁵

2.3 DOMINATION AND CONTROL OF SPACE: "THE BATTLE FOR QUALITY"

From the earliest days of the Soviet state, state intervention in cultural matters was common and was guided by official policy. Throughout the 1920s, however, these interventions were rarely direct implementations of a consistent and coherent policy on the part of the party or state. Debates raged within cultural commissions about the nature of culture within a workers' state, and as often as not actions taken within the cultural sphere had more to do with the personal orientation of the bureaucrat taking the action than with the often contradictory official policies of the state itself.¹⁴⁶ In the middle of the 1920s the state took a relatively "hands off" approach to aesthetic policy, generally preferring to wait and see how the disputes between proletarianists, avant-gardists, advocates of classical culture, and fellow travelers all played out.¹⁴⁷ Even this piecemeal bureaucratic control was constrained by the physical facts of Soviet space, however. Though the Blue Blouse and its affiliates were responsible to a number of organs of Soviet power, the record suggests that there was in fact a minimal level of interaction between the

¹⁴⁵ On "cinemafication," see Widdis, *Visions of A New Land* 14-16.

¹⁴⁶ See for example Iurii Larin's patronage of the playwright N.N. Lerner, which led to the overturn of the banning of one of his plays, or the intensity of the relationship between Vsevolod Meyerhold and Vladimir Blium, the chief censor at Glavprolitprosvet from 1923-1927. Fox, Michael S. "Glavlit, Censorship, and the Problem of Party Policy in Cultural Affairs, 1922-28." *Soviet Studies* 44.6 (1992). 1045-1068; 1051; Richmond, Steven D. "Ideologically Firm: Soviet Theatre Censorship, 1921-1928" Diss. University of Chicago, 1996. 236-238.

¹⁴⁷ This policy was confirmed by the 1925 resolution "On Party policy in the sphere of literature," which is reproduced in Clark, Katerina and Evgeny Dobrenko with Andrei Artizov and Oleg Naumov. *Soviet Culture and Power: A History in Documents, 1917-1953*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007. 40-47.

organization's Moscow center and Soviet agencies, and virtually no control of the geographic periphery by the center. These limits to central control were set in part by geography and in part by the mechanism of regulation that existed on the periphery of Soviet culture.

The Soviet censorship agency, Glavrepertkom, was established in 1923, under the authority of Glavlit (the Main Directorate on Literature and Presses), itself under the authority of Narkompros (The Peoples Commissariat of Enlightenment).¹⁴⁸ All scripts that were produced professionally had to be approved by Glavrepertkom, and variety theatre scripts (and therefore the Blue Blouse) were no exception. In fact, Glavrepertkom's first major campaign was against Moscow's variety theatres, which the bureau's leaders did not consider proletarian enough.¹⁴⁹ This campaign (which took place in the summer of 1923) probably aided the Blue Blouse in their early days, as variety theatre, club, and bar managers were looking for ways to raise "the ideological and artistic level of variety performers."¹⁵⁰ The political *Estrada* produced by the Blue Blouse, must have also seemed a safe route to variety theatre performers, many of whom indicated their willingness to perform anything so long as they were not harassed by censors. As Iakov Trainin, the first head of Glavrepertkom, explained: "The general leitmotif of their declarations now is: 'We in general don't care what we sing, just give us material that works for the variety stage'."¹⁵¹

In addition to having to pass a review by Glavrepertkom, Blue Blouse material also had to pass Mosgublits (Glavlit's Moscow subsidiary) censorship before it could be published in

¹⁴⁸ On the creation of Glavrepertkom, see Richmond 96-183. On the sometimes unstable organizational relationship between Glavrepertkom, Glavlit, and Narkompros, see Fox 1049-1052.

¹⁴⁹ Iakov Trainin, the first head of Glavrepertkom, had been a member of proletkul't, while Vladimir Blium, his chief censor, had been a vocal advocate for Meyerhold's "Theatrical October" and a founding editor of the left theatre journal *Novyi zritel'*. Richmond, 193-202 (on the campaign against the variety theatres), 231-245 (on the censors' histories).

¹⁵⁰ From the resolution of a conference on variety theatre sponsored by Glavrepertkom. Quoted in Richmond, 201.

¹⁵¹ Quoted in Richmond, 197.

their magazine.¹⁵² The fact that *Blue Blouse* was published by *Trud i kniga*, the imprint of the MGSPS, did not exempt them from pre-publication censorship, as this was mandatory for all trade union publications, regardless of their status as party-affiliated institutions.¹⁵³ As Steven Lovell argues, however, the censorship of journals, especially those with runs of only a few thousand, was relatively relaxed:

The journal press of the 1920s was considerably freer than the newspapers. This more relaxed situation was due substantially to the Party's unwillingness (until around 1928) to involve itself directly in this less *massovyi* [mass-oriented] area of print culture. There was, however, another important factor: in the 1920s several cultural elites were competing for the right to establish cultural authority Any revolutionary regime has to work hard to generate cultural authority and it is quite understandable that the Bolsheviks were prepared to devolve this task to writers and literary critics for a few years.¹⁵⁴

This tolerance was made possible by the self-policing of editorial boards, each of which was headed by a "responsible editor" (Iuzhanin was the responsible editor of *Blue Blouse*): an official position with a great deal of potential liability that could only change hands with the approval of Glavlit.¹⁵⁵

Despite the concerns about the content of the Blue Blouse's work voiced by the group's opponents, it seems that the overwhelming majority of their scripts passed censorship without significant issue. This may be unsurprising since their work was unabashedly pro-Soviet and,

¹⁵² The editors confirmed this to a correspondent from Shuia, who felt their work could use additional censorship. "My otvechaem." *Siniia bluza* 47-48 (1926), 73.

¹⁵³ Very little information is available about the section of Glavlit responsible for censoring periodicals, however (Fox, 1054). I have not yet searched Mosgublīt's archive for evidence of specific encounters with *Blue Blouse*.

¹⁵⁴ Lovell, Stephen. *The Russian Reading Revolution: Print Culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. p100.

¹⁵⁵ Fox 1059.

therefore, unlikely to fall afoul of the censors, who only officially banned work that fell into a handful of categories including: “works of a pornographic character,” “works inciting nationalistic and religious fanaticism,” “speculatory Tsarist plays or monarchial propaganda,” and “works comprised of agitation against Soviet power.”¹⁵⁶ Glavrepertkom also considered several unofficial categories of unacceptable content, some of which a few Blue Blouse scripts could have, conceivably, edged too close to: “idealization of hooliganism,” “crude Sovietization, which gives an opposite effect,” “malicious ignoring and perversion of Soviet everyday life,” and “incorrectly portraying the revolution.”¹⁵⁷ The fact of publication, however, indicates the acceptability of the material printed in *Blue Blouse*, and the earliest rejected submission held in Glavrepertkom’s archive, a song by Grigorii Shneerson called “the fake shockworker (*Izheudarnik*),” came only in May 1931.¹⁵⁸ The censors found no problem with the song’s lyrics, but rather criticized its melody for having “left front” qualities.¹⁵⁹

Official censorship commissions were not the only agencies, to which the Blue Blouse had to answer. The organization existed under the auspices of the MGSPS, making that trade union council (and by extension its parent council, the VTsSPS) responsible for the group’s actions. Cultural work, however, was only a small part of the responsibilities of these institutions, and Blue Blouse performances made up a relatively small part of the cultural work

¹⁵⁶ For an in depth discussion of these categories, see Richmond pp.259-336.

¹⁵⁷ Richmond, 308-309.

¹⁵⁸ One reason why the Blue Blouse may have begun receiving unwanted attention in the early 1930s is the dominance of members of The Revolutionary Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) on the commission’s board. The continuity of the institutional identity of Glavrepertkom hides the intense struggles over censorship policy that had raged within the bureau from its inception. See Richmond, *passim*, but especially 343-433.

¹⁵⁹ RGALI f.656 op.1 d.4036 l.1. The piece was eventually staged under the direction of I.I. Lagutin with a costume by Nina Aizenberg, so the melody must not have been beyond revision. The costume design can be seen at: http://bakhrushin.theatre.ru/collection/performance/1932_the_false_shock_worker/ This is the earliest record of a Glavrepertkom review of work submitted by the Blue Blouse. There is one other record in their archive, which deals with a submission from October 1931 that was also censored primarily because of its music (RGALI f.656 op.1 d.4036). While it is probably not safe to assume that the agency retained all of its records on rejected submissions (which would imply that these were the only two), it does seem likely, given the mass of published material, that the overwhelming majority of Blue Blouse work passed censorship without too much difficulty.

that they oversaw. The VTsSPS was the highest organ in the Soviet trade union hierarchy, and was responsible for determining trade union policy that was binding across the entire state. The MGSPS was the largest and most important of its affiliates, and was responsible for ensuring that the decisions taken by VTsSPS were carried out by the various trade unions operating in the capital.¹⁶⁰

These tasks were made more formidable by the dual nature of trade unions operating within a workers' state. As William Chase explains:

[The unions were placed] in an awkward role. As the executors of policy, they had to urge workers on to greater productivity and to struggle against poor discipline and work habits. At the same time they were to represent and protect their constituents against management's excesses and to cultivate the initiative of class conscious members... . The delicate balancing act required by the unions' newly defined dual role was more than they were capable of performing.¹⁶¹

Even within the cultural sphere, the trade union councils had an enormous number of responsibilities: overseeing clubs, theatres, presses, and newspapers all dedicated to raising the cultural, political, and educational level of union members.

The result was that the trade union councils seem to have paid relatively little attention to the day-to-day workings of the Blue Blouse, intervening in their activities only occasionally. As Khaskel' Diament, head of the cultural section of the MGSPS, makes clear in his essay "Cultural Work and Numbers," the MGSPS's primary concern was the "growth... of the cultural life of the

¹⁶⁰ On the institutional structure of Soviet trade unions, see Sorensen, Jay B. *The Life and Death of Soviet Trade Unionism*. New York: Atherton, 1969; 188-201.

¹⁶¹ Chase, William J. *Workers, Society, and the Soviet State: Labor and Life in Moscow, 1918-1929*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990; 53.

Moscow proletariat.”¹⁶² Diament also preferred this growth to be quantifiable rather than measurable only through “personal observation.” It seems likely, therefore, that he was generally pleased by the gigantism of the Blue Blouse movement. The amount of attention that he devoted to the organization, however, might be indicated by the fact that on one of the few documented occasions when the Blue Blouse came under the scrutiny of the MGSPS—the hearing regarding the complaint from a club described above—Diament did not even attend the meeting. Instead it was presided over by his assistant Aleksandr Rudnikov.¹⁶³

The most important interventions into the activities of the Blue Blouse organization were the related decisions by the VTsSPS to close *Blue Blouse*, incorporating it into *Club Stage*, and then not to include the proposed Blue Blouse section in *Club Stage*.¹⁶⁴ While official opinion was turning against variety theatre by the end of 1927, this decision was not the result of a coherent policy carried out from top to bottom.¹⁶⁵ The MGSPS, after all, continued to support the Blue Blouse, subsequently publishing the magazines *Repertoire of the Blue Blouse* and *Small Forms of Club Spectacle*. More important was the fact that the editor of *Club Stage*, Iosif Isaev, sided strongly with the proponents of staging full-length plays in clubs and collaborating closely with professional artists working in academic theatres.¹⁶⁶ The argument between the editors was decided in favor of Isaev, no doubt in large part because he was also the head of the cultural

¹⁶² Diament, Kh. “Kul'trabota i tsifry.” In *Moskovskii Gubernskii Sovet Professional'nikh Soiuzov. Kul'turno-prosvetitel'naia rabota Moskovskikh professional'nikh soiuzov*. Moskva: Trud i kniga, 1925: 3.

¹⁶³ TsGAMO f.180 op.1. d.1554 l.9

¹⁶⁴ For Iuzhanin's account of these events, see Iuzhanin, Boris. “Kak zhe byt' dal'she.” *Siniia bluza* 69-70 (1927), 46-49.

¹⁶⁵ For the turn against variety theatre see Mally's discussion of the conference on theatre sponsored by agit-prop in *Revolutionary Acts* 102-107.

¹⁶⁶ See, for example, the editorial with which he opens the first issue of *Club Stage* or his speech at the agit-prop congress. Isaev, I. “Osnovnye voprosy i perspektivy razvitiia klubnoi stseny.” *Klubnaia stsena* 1 (1927), 5-7; Krylov, S.M ed. *Puti razvitiia teatra*. Moskva: Kinopechat, 1927, 122-127.

section of the VTsSPS, a member of the Bolshevik party since 1910, and a well respected member of the council's presidium.¹⁶⁷

As the Blue Blouse became increasingly troubled (artistically and politically) in the early 1930s, they were passed in rapid succession from the MGSPS to the Administration of Moscow Theatrical-Spectacle Undertakings (UMZP) and finally to the State Administration of Music-Hall, Estrada, and Circus Enterprises (GOMETs). In early 1931 GOMETs officials held a series of meetings with what was left of the Blue Blouse leadership (Iuzhanin had already been arrested and Mrosovskii had left the organization as well) in an attempt to reorganize and revive the Blue Blouse organization.¹⁶⁸ At one of these meetings Arsh, the head of one of the touring Blue Blouse troupes, offered a clear diagnosis of the organization's problem:

The Blue Blouse must not be considered like a professional theatre. It consisted of the mass development of do-it-yourself activity in our clubs and it led the movement of do-it-yourself circles. When the theatre departed from this and lost its connection to the circles it moved to the side and the do-it-yourself movement outgrew it. We are talking about the external and formal, but have forgotten the fundamental, that we were the barker of the party.¹⁶⁹

The meetings resulted in several proposals aimed at the revival of the Blue Blouse under GOMETs, including reworking the performances of the troupes, re-establishing ties with the

¹⁶⁷ Isaev's career ended shortly after his magazine's takeover of *Blue Blouse*. At the Eighth Trade Union Congress in 1928 Isaev sided with Mikhail Tomskii and the right opposition against Stalin. Following the defeat of the right opposition he was relieved of his position in the VTsSPS, expelled from the party, and kicked out of his two-room apartment. Nosach, V.I. and N.D. Zvereva. *Rasstrel'nye 30-e gody i profsoiuzy*. Sankt-Peterburg: SPBGUP, 2007. 48-49.

¹⁶⁸ The records from these meetings are held in GTsTM f.627 op.1 ed. khr. 3 ll. 80-90.

¹⁶⁹ GTsTM f. 627 op.1 ed. khr. 3 l.80

trade unions, and reaching out to RAPP for support.¹⁷⁰ The organization had, however, declined too far to recover, and none of these efforts were successful in righting it.¹⁷¹

While at the height of their success, the professional Blue Blouse organizers in Moscow declared themselves to be “[t]he guides of the living newspaper movement on an all-union scale,” in reality they had no effective mechanisms of direct control over the activities of their provincial affiliates.¹⁷² Membership in the Blue Blouse movement was entirely voluntary—as noted above, the primary requirements for aspiring troupes were that they register with the organization and subscribe to *Blue Blouse*. The first of these requirements also appears to have been optional (the second may have been as well). The editors of *Blue Blouse*, for example, clearly did not use registration to determine which groups’ photographs could be included in the *Blue Blouse Album*.¹⁷³ There is no record of the Blue Blouse turning down a potential member for any reason or of the group expelling a member for any reason. This makes sense, as their claims to significance rested largely on the size of their organization.

The organizational center embraced this lack of control to a certain extent, encouraging affiliates to stage material that they wrote themselves based on local themes, but they tempered this encouragement with regularly published calls to produce material ‘the right way’. Generally these articles focused on the need to provide information in addition to humor. For example, the editors express their concern that local troupes focus too much on humorous *chastushki* in a 1925 article titled, “The Blue Blouse is Not a Political Cabaret,” and in “Once Again—How to

¹⁷⁰ GTsTM f.627 op.1 ed. khr. 3 l. 89-90.

¹⁷¹ One reason why the plans formulated at these meeting may have come to nothing is that early in 1932 GOMETs, itself came under serious attack, with a purge being carried out within its administration. Neirick, Miriam. *When Pigs Could Fly and Bears Could Dance: A History of the Soviet Circus*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012, 75-76.

¹⁷² *Siniaia bluza* 44 (1926), 60.

¹⁷³ *Siniaia Bluza* 71/72 (1927). For more on the album, see Chapter 3.

Construct a Local Living Newspaper” they insist that “jolly” numbers must be intermingled with “articles like ‘The Budget of the USSR’.”¹⁷⁴

The resolutions that came out of the congresses of Blue Blouseniks—annual gatherings of performers held annually in Moscow—frequently attempted to set standards for local production as well. The first congress, for example, produced a six point resolution on music in Blue Blouse performances, which called on local troupes to remove unacceptable popular music (gypsy songs, foxtrots, and the like) from their repertoire, replacing them with contemporary revolutionary songs (the magazine promised to print more music in the future), popular music that grew out of class struggle, and montages of the high points of heroic romantic classics like Beethoven and Chopin.¹⁷⁵

Finally, the Blue Blouse in Moscow offered training to local groups (or their leaders) that could make it to the capital. While they could not finance these trips, Blue Blouse congresses offered an opportunity to unify the aesthetics of the movement, at least to some extent. Following the second congress, one group from Uralsk expressed excitement about the rapid improvement that their troupe had made following the return of their delegates:

Now our collective has begun to restructure our work and this restructuring has been completely successful. Our first presentation after this experience was... at the Army club and the second at the palace of culture. The success was evident. Our entry march—which lasted exactly two and a half minutes, and included four large pyramids, which transformed from one into another, strong singing, and

¹⁷⁴ “Zhivaia gazeta tipa ‘Sinei bluzy’-- ne polit-kabare.” *Siniaia bluza* 12 (1925), 5-6. “Eshche raz-- kak stroit' zhivuiu gazety na mestakh.” *Siniaia bluza* 13 (1925), 59.

¹⁷⁵ “Rezoliutsii o musike v ‘sinei bluze’.” *Siniaia bluza* 23-24 (1925), 89.

slogans and recited material intermixed with action—ended with a hurricane of applause.¹⁷⁶

While there is no way to know precisely how successful the soft control of the movement by the Moscow center was, there seems to have been a desire by many of the troupes to defer to Moscow's authority and "get it right." As a letter writer from a troupe in Bakhmach assured the editors of *Blue Blouse*: "we seriously adhere to the methodological instructions interspersed throughout *Blue Blouse*."¹⁷⁷

Intervention into the activities of Blue Blouse troupes at the local level official seems to have been minimal and sporadic as well. While any number of agencies, from local trade unions and trade union councils to local censorships boards, could exercise authority over what local troupes could perform, it seems that they rarely did. At the metalworkers' club in Kharkiv (which will be discussed further in Chapter 5), the "editors" of the club's living newspaper submitted their plan for upcoming shows at meetings of the club's cultural section. According to the extant minutes of these meetings, in every instance but one their plan was approved without significant discussion. The only point that occasioned dispute was not contested on political or artistic grounds, but because the troupe asked for money to buy boxing gloves to be used in a sketch (the committee refused them the funds, suggesting, instead, that they modify an old pair of work gloves).¹⁷⁸ It seems likely that there was a great deal of self-policing involved: every troupe had a leader (at least in principle) who could be held responsible if a sketch went too far. It also seems unlikely that the members of local troupes—who were, after all, activists devoting

¹⁷⁶ An article from *Krasnyi uralsk* (2 Nov. 1926) reprinted in Mrozovskii, Viktor. "V Moskvu!" *Siniaia bluza* 46 (1926), 2.

¹⁷⁷ "Na Mestakh." *Siniaia bluza* 49 (1927), 45.

¹⁷⁸ The extent records of these meetings are held in DAKhO f.1010. See, for example, DAKhO f.1010 op.1 s.1209 l.6; DAKhO f.1010 op.1 s.1209 l.42; DAKhO f.1010 op.1 s.1227 l.3.

their spare time to agitational theatre—would, themselves, be interested in staging anything too far out of line with acceptable political positions. This lack of control, however, was a major point of anxiety for Bolshevik cultural organizers, as evidenced by the concern they showed at a 1927 conference on agit-prop that works staged by do-it-yourself club theatres might be “pornographic.”¹⁷⁹

While in principle a number of organizations and institutions controlled by the State and the Communist Party had the authority to exert control over the activities of the Blue Blouse, in reality this control was rarely exercised. Instead, the activities of the Blue Blouse and their provincial affiliates were largely self-directed and self-policed. The “do-it-yourself” label that is applied to their work relates to more than the production values of their shows: Blue Blouse shows were fundamentally participatory in that they allowed members of their troupes to engage with the political and artistic life of the new state in a manner that (within limits) they themselves determined.

2.4 PRODUCTION OF SPACE: EVERY PERIPHERY A CENTER

The Blue Blouse movement produced a network of do-it-yourself performers that contributed in important ways to the radical changes in the material space of cultural work that occurred during the Soviet period. The movement facilitated a massive shift in the demographics of the people producing cultural work, elevating the roles played not only by workers and young communists, but other historically disadvantaged populations as well. In his recent discussion of the

¹⁷⁹ Mally 105; Krylov 293.

geography of theatre, Steve Tillis argues that because of the requirements of performing for an audience, performances are often organized around “theatre centers,” places—cities neighborhood, or festivals—that people go to see theatre.¹⁸⁰ The Blue Blouse movement produced a massive proliferation of theatre centers, expanding the territory of cultural production, helping to make theatrical performances a common occurrence in places where they had been rarities, and spreading modernist aesthetics beyond the major centers of the state. Finally, the movement represented a concerted attempt to alter the relationship between these centers and the periphery in favor of the latter. These changes are clearly highlighted by an examination of the correspondence between the editors of *Blue Blouse* and the movement’s affiliates during the final years of the magazine’s existence.

Workers or young communists made up the majority of participants in most Blue Blouse troupes. Letters to the editor frequently bragged of the proletarian makeup of their companies: a member of the troupe from the metalworkers’ club in Baku announced that, of the 16 members of their collective, “80% are proletarians from the workbenches,” while a letter writer from the “red printer” club in Tashkent announced that their collective consisted of 20 members, “all industrial workers and members of the Komsomol or the Communist Party.”¹⁸¹

Other troupes, however, were often organized to help members of groups who previously had no place in the cultural landscape. “The Labor Exchange” in Baku, for example, was one of several Blue Blouse troupes made up of the unemployed. According to one member of the troupe, the collective had to reform itself every month or so “as the majority of our members find work!” The editors of *Blue Blouse* responded to this report with a plea to the Baku exchange to

¹⁸⁰ Tillis, Steve. “Conceptualizing Space: The Geographic Dimension of World Theatre.” *Theatre Survey* 52.2 (Nov. 2011), 301-327. 315-318.

¹⁸¹ “Gde. Chto. Kak.” *Siniaia bluza* 73 (1928), 60-63.

reward the “self-dedication of the unemployed to the sphere of cultural work” by finding the means to provide a stipend to the troupe’s director and piano player.¹⁸² In Sergeev Posad, the “Friends of Children” society organized the Green Blouses, a troupe that consisted of orphans. One of the organizers reported that “the performers excelled at rhythmic movement. The children’s creativity made a good impression--and not only on children. The Living Newspaper was warmly received by adults as well.”¹⁸³

The movement also opened up new theatrical spaces for women. While the editors of *Blue Blouse* advocated organizing troupes that were made up predominantly of men, several troupes were also made up entirely of women. “Classroom Screen,” the collective formed by the State Foreign Language Institute was one of them (Figure 13). While in their letter to the editor they stressed their topicality and connection to everyday life, much like other, predominantly male, troupes, they ended the letter with their mailing address (which was unusual for letters to *Blue Blouse*), because they “very much want[ed] to establish correspondence with other collectives made up exclusively of women,” suggesting that the gender composition of the troupe was more than the accidental result of the gendering of the institution, with which it was affiliated.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² “Sinebluznik.” *Siniaia bluza* 52 (1927), 24.

¹⁸³ “Sinebluznik.” *Siniaia bluza* 49 (1927), 24-25.

¹⁸⁴ “Gde, chto, kak.” *Siniaia bluza* 74 (1928), 62-63.

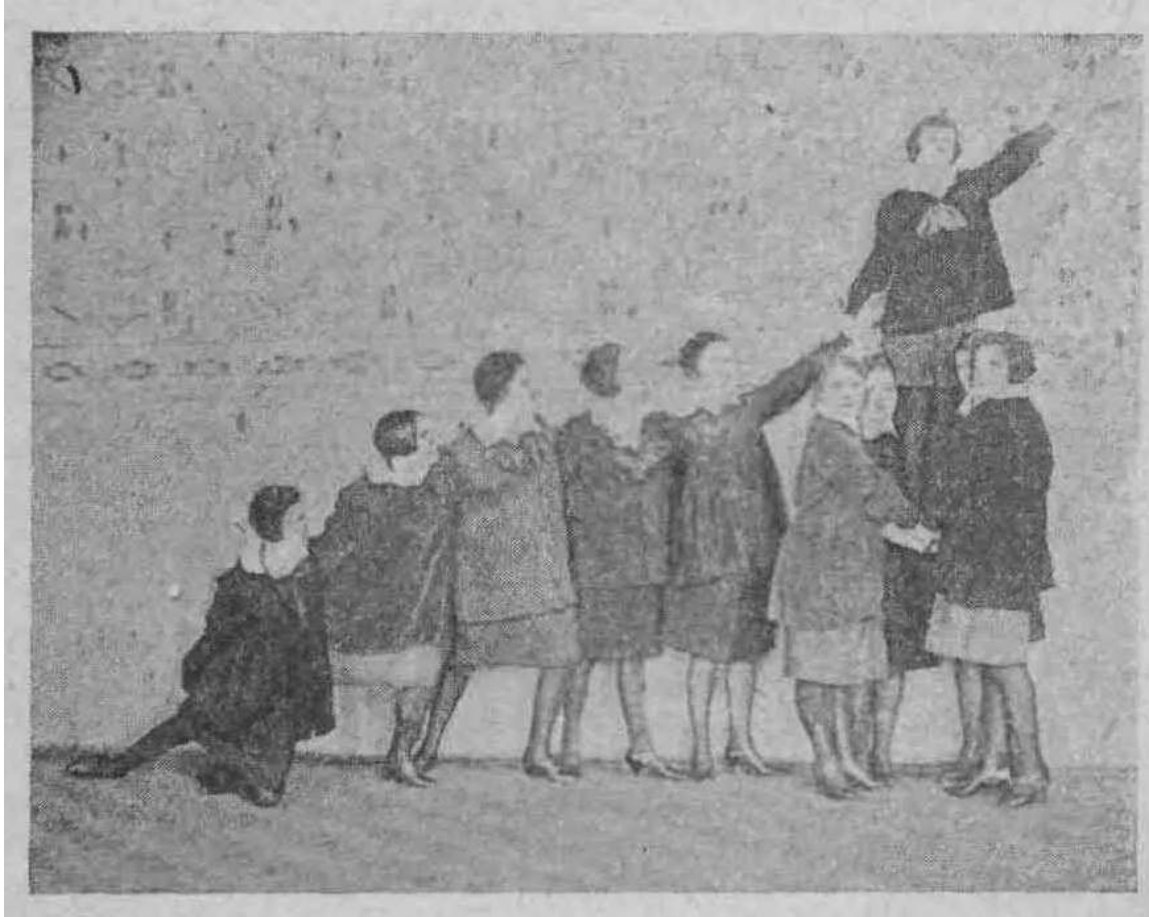


Figure 13. The “Classroom Screen” collective in Kyiv performs an oratory. *Siniaia bluza* 74 (1928), 30.

The expansion of the space of performance in the Soviet Union that the Blue Blouse movement carried out was not limited to workers’ clubs. In Kyiv, Dr. Sanzhur organized a living newspaper, the “Red Brush,” to perform for patients at the October Hospital. Encouraged by the “repeated success” of their performances as well as their excellent relations with the local Council of Trade Unions and the Union of Medical and Sanitary Workers, they announced a plan to change their name to the White Blouses after the uniform of the hospital.¹⁸⁵ In the Arbat neighborhood of Moscow, the residents of the housing unit located at 4 Krivoi Lane organized a Blue Blouse troupe, “The Call.” Their first performance had been prepared in secret as a New

¹⁸⁵ “Cho delaem, o chem думаem.” *Siniaia bluza* 76 (1928), 62.

Year's surprise for the other residents. Among the work that the troupe staged in subsequent performances was Vladimir Mass and Viktor Ardov's *Alarm! They're sweeping it away!*, a longer play that dealt in no small part with the difficulties of communal living, which must have been even more topical when staged in the courtyard of an apartment complex.¹⁸⁶

The Blue Blouse movement also produced a significant expansion of theatrical possibilities in the national territories of the USSR's periphery. In Dagestan, an autonomous republic in the northern Caucasus where the first professional theatre was established only in 1931, "Workbench"—a Blue Blouse troupe organized in Makhach-Kala, the republic's capital—claimed to be exceptionally active in 1928:

We organized "workbench" recently—four months ago, but in that short time we have succeeded in releasing six issues [of our living newspaper]. "Workbench" has become, for our backwards and far off land, the guiding light of the new theatre. We do everything with the goal of making our variety theatre appeal to workers. Our wish has come true. We perform in almost every town in our republic with great success. We rework material collectively.¹⁸⁷

As the letter-writer emphasizes, the Blue Blouse movement produced not just any theatre, but a theatre that provided a "guiding light" to help performers collectively banish "backwards-ness" and embrace modernity.

The place of the Blue Blouse in the production of this modernity becomes visible in several images sent to *Blue Blouse* from the "Grey Blouse" troupe in Ufa, the capital of the

¹⁸⁶ "Gde. Chto. Kak." *Siniaia bluza* 73 (1928) 60. The script is Ardov, V. and V. Mass. "Karaul, Zatiraiut!." *Siniaia bluza* 35 (1926), 7-51.

¹⁸⁷ On the theatre in Dagestan in the 1920s, see Zul'fukarova, M. "Teatr Dagestana." *Istoriia Sovetskogo dramaticheskogo teatra*. t.2. Moskva: Nauka, 1966, 412-415; Zul'fukarova, M. "Dagestanskii teatr." *Istoriia Sovetskogo dramaticheskogo teatra*. t.3. Moskva: Nauka, 1967, 535-540; "Gde, Chto, Kak." *Siniaia bluza* 74 (1928), 62.

Bashkir Republic. The first shows performers dressed in modern sportswear engaged in a “physical culture” performance (Figure 14).¹⁸⁸ Sportswear (*sportodezhda*) and physical culture had become closely associated with Soviet modernism. Constructivist artists like Varvara Stepanova even tried their hands at designing sportswear because “like *prozodezhda*, or production clothing, *sportodezhda*, constituted a new type of costume for the new, post-revolutionary era.”¹⁸⁹ Another image shows members of the collective wearing uniforms modeled after those worn by the Moscow Blue Blouse and engaging in the modernist obsession with flight and airplanes by performing an “Avia-March” (Figure 15).¹⁹⁰ A third image is a series of costume designs for *Koroleva Erred*, the Blue Blouse’s full-length musical, drawn by an artist from the Ufa collective, whose name, sadly, was not printed alongside her(?) work (figure 16).¹⁹¹ While the designs from Ufa are not as indebted to constructivism as the ones created for the Moscow troupe by Nina Aizenberg (Figure 17; see also Figures 5, 50, and 52) they are a striking appropriation of the image of the “New Woman,” integrating the Bashkir Republic into the international circulation of representations of a modern femininity.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ *Siniaia bluza* 74 (1928), 58.

¹⁸⁹ O’Mahony 26-27.

¹⁹⁰ *Siniaia bluza* 74 (1928), 37. For a discussion of the place of aviation in Russian modernism, see Harte, Tim. *Fast Forward: The Aesthetics and Ideology of Speed in Russian Avant-Garde Culture, 1910-1930*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009, *passim*.

¹⁹¹ *Siniaia bluza* 73 (1928), 55.

¹⁹² See Otto, Elizabeth and Vanessa Rocco, eds. *The New Woman International: Representations in Photography and Film from the 1870s through the 1960s*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011.



Figure 14. The “Grey Blouse” collective in Ufa performs a physical culture number. *Siniaia bluza 74* (1928), 58.



Figure 15. The “Grey Blouse” collective in Ufa performs an “Avia-March.” *Siniaia bluza 74* (1928), 37.

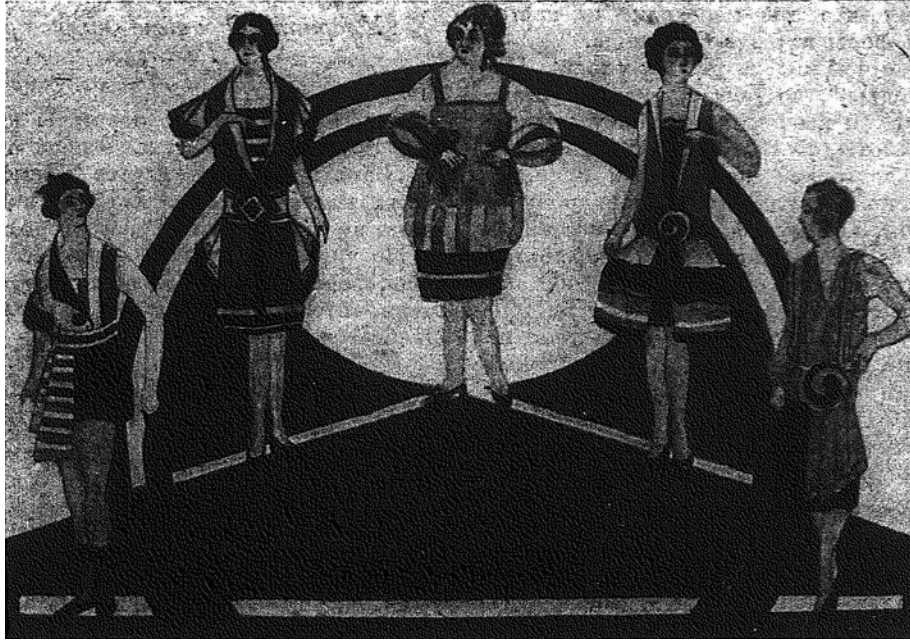


Figure 16. Costume Designs for *Koroleva Erred* (Vol'pin and Listov) from the “Grey Blouse” collective in Ufa, Bashkir Republic. *Siniaia bluza* 73 (1928), 55.

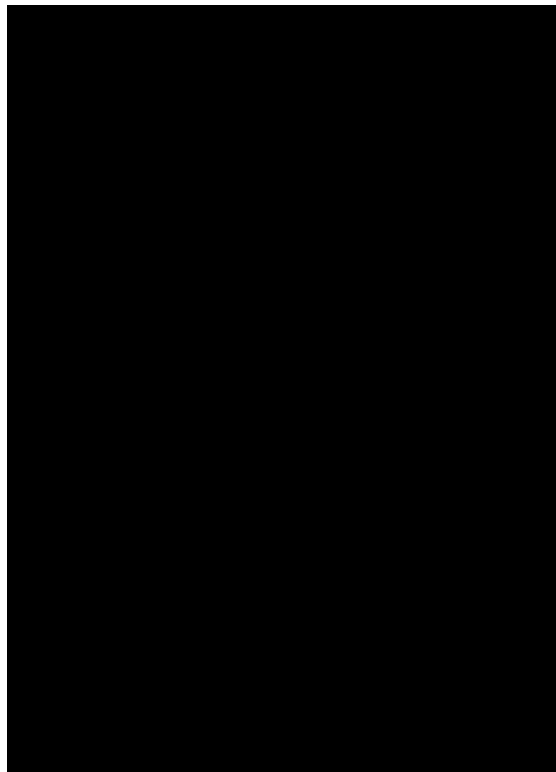


Figure 17. Nina Aizenberg. Costume Design for “Komsomol Girl” in *Koroleva Erred* (Vol'pin and Listov). *Siniaia bluza* 63-64 (1927),7.

The final issues of *Blue Blouse* document a shift of emphasis and responsibility for the movement from the center to the periphery. For example, in late 1927 the magazine printed a long letter from Vechorskii, the leader of a Blue Blouse troupe in the Nizhnye Tal'dy in the Urals, which criticized the aesthetic direction of the Blue Blouse movement, singling out the full length operetta *Koroleva Erred* for special criticism. "It was not Koroleva who erred, but the Moscow editors of *Blue Blouse*," he insisted, accusing the editors of wasting the resources of their subscribers while leaving thousands of collectives without suitable new material.¹⁹³ The editors published a short statement after his letter, calling it "A matter of fact, healthy criticism, which should be considered both in the center and on the periphery."¹⁹⁴ Two issues later, *Blue Blouse* published a round of responses to Vechorskii's critique written by Blue Blouseniks from troupes on the periphery, many of which defended the direction of the professional troupes in general and *Koroleva Erred* in particular. The responses were introduced by a statement from the editors explaining that they did not respond to Vechorskii's criticism themselves because "The statements from local workers printed below are, in an important way, our response."¹⁹⁵ In these final issues, there was a genuinely multidirectional discussion about the future activity of the Blue Blouse movement, rather than the unidirectional dispersal of information from the center with a response from the periphery. The magazine, itself, however, was still printed in Moscow and shipped to local troupes on the periphery.

¹⁹³ Vechorskii, P. Iu. "Chto diktuet zhizn'." *Siniaia bluza* 69-70 (1927), 56-61. 59.

¹⁹⁴ Vechorskii, P. Iu. "Chto diktuet zhizn'." *Siniaia bluza* 69-70 (1927), 56-61. 61.

¹⁹⁵ "Chto nas volnuet." *Siniaia bluza* 73 (1928), 53-59.

2.5 CONCLUSION

Throughout the middle of the 1920s the Blue Blouse movement spread across the material space of the Soviet Union, overcoming many—but not all—of the challenges imposed by the territory’s physical geography, relative lack of infrastructure, and cultural and linguistic diversity. Troupes affiliated with the movement performed in a variety of spaces, ranging from the beer halls of the capital to the Columned Hall of Moscow’s House of Trade Unions, to the workers’ clubs and reading huts that were being organized across the Soviet Union. While the movement never managed to cover the entire space of the Soviet Union—to stretch “From Kamchatka to Georgia” as one of their slogans phrased it—activists organized troupes in most of the major population centers of the state, even if that meant translating texts from Russian or adapting them to different national cultures. While the magazine *Blue Blouse* and each of the troupes that made up the Blue Blouse movement were politically responsible to a number of state organizations—trade unions, club committees, and censorship bureaus—the same features of Soviet space that challenged the spread of the movement impeded attempts to control it from any one political or geographical center, with the result that local performances were often truly “do-it-yourself.” The spread of the movement resulted in the production of a great deal of new space for performance, establishing troupes in places that previously had no permanent theatre, and enabling populations that had historically been marginalized—workers, women, and ethnic minorities. In all of this, the Blue Blouse was active in producing the “horizontal” space that characterized the early Soviet Union, eroding the hierarchial relationship between center and periphery.

3.0 REPRESENTATION OF SPACE: *BLUE BLOUSE* AND THE BLUE- BLOUSENIKS

Listen Clubs of the Soviet Union-
To the news about issues of *Blue Blouse*:
From number five issues regularly
Will come out a pair per month.
Twenty four issues-- to put it another way,
Will be issued in every year.
For additional clarity, these booklets
Will be four printers sheets in size.
The price of a one month subscription
Is only one ruble, ten.
For three months a discount subscription
For six issues, three rubles and change.
Hey, and for half a year's subscription
For twelve issues it's just six, twenty.
You'll never find anywhere, in a word,
Such preferential conditions.
So send your orders, without wasting a moment
To Moscow, to the printing house "Labor and Books"
On Bolshaia Dmitrovka at the House of Unions.
That's all about *Blue Blouse*.
— "From the Editors" (1924)¹⁹⁶

The rapid growth of the movement across the territory of the Soviet Union would not have been possible were it not for the publication the *Blue Blouse*'s eponymous biweekly magazine, which

¹⁹⁶ Слушай клубы Советского Союза,--/ Новость о выпусках «Синяя Блуза»:/ С номера пятого выпуски регулярно./ Будут выходить в месяц попарно./ Сборников 24,-- иначе скажем./ Будут выпускаться в году каждом./ Для ясности прибавим, книжечка та/ Размкером в четыре печатных листа./ Цена тарифа на один месяц/ Толко-- рубль десят./ На три месяца подписка выгодней/ За 6 выпусков-- три рубля с грибной./ Ну, а на полгода если подписаться/ За 12 сборников всего шесть двадцать./ Нигде нет, одним словом./ Таких льготных условий./ Итак шлите заказы, не теряя мига/ В Москву, в издательство «Труд и Книга»/ Большая Дмитровка, Дом Союзов./ Вот и все о «Синей Блузе». -- "От редакции." "От redaktsiia." *Siniaia Bluza* 4 (1924), 2.

was printed from late 1924 to June 1928 in runs ranging between 5,000 and 15,000 copies.¹⁹⁷ The magazine, which was printed by *Trud i kniga* the publishing house of the Moscow Regional Council of Trade Unions (MGSPS), was originally intended merely to provide material for amateur living newspaper groups and drama circles throughout the Soviet Union. It published everything a group of performers could possibly need to stage the Blue Blouse's productions—scripts, staging instructions, musical scores, patterns for costumes, even theoretical pronouncements. Beginning in late 1925, however, the editorial board became increasingly interested in these groups, and began to attempt actively to cultivate a movement.

The first issue of *Blue Blouse* was published in 1924 shortly after the original troupe left the State Institute of Journalism (Figure 18). After a short essay introducing the concept of the living newspaper and enumerating the benefits the form promised, the issue consists entirely of the script of a complete living newspaper, which was offered as an “ideal example” to be followed and adapted as needed by drama circles at local clubs.¹⁹⁸ Almost entirely practical in nature, the first issue and several of those that followed were intended merely as a way of making the repertoire of a popular living newspaper group available to those who might wish to imitate it. As the work of the Moscow Blue Blouse troupes gained in popularity, the role of the magazine started to change. When the Blue Blouse and their imitators began to conceive of themselves as a movement, as discussed in chapter two, *Blue Blouse* became much more focused on functioning as the “central organ of the Blue Blouse movement.”¹⁹⁹ In this role the magazine increasingly devoted space to correspondence, theoretical and organizational directives, and reports on the activities of provincial affiliates.

¹⁹⁷ For a full bibliographic account of *Blue Blouse* see the entry on *Siniaia Bluza* in Vishnevskii, Veniamin, ed. *Teatral'naia periodika 1917-1940: bibliograficheskii ukazatel'*. Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1941: 46-47.

¹⁹⁸ “Zhivaia universal'naia gazeta kul'totdela MGSPS Siniaia Bluza.” *Siniaia Bluza* 1 (1924): 7.

¹⁹⁹ “2-e Vsesoiuznoe soveshchanie sinebluznikov.” *Siniaia Bluza* 44 (1926): 59.



Figure 18. Cover of the first issue of Blue Blouse. *Siniia bluza 1* (1924)

From this point on the magazine served not only as a theatrical resource for provincial groups, but also as a forum in which they could share their achievements. *Blue Blouse* added sections for correspondence, a registry of troupes, a pullout inset titled “Blue Blousenik: the Organ of the Blue Blouse Movement”, and a section on Blue Blouse activities “At the Local Level.” The material that they published was vulnerable to distortions and exaggerations, but the magazine is an ideal source of information regarding what the editors wanted the movement to be and what they thought it should be. In other words, it is quite productive to view the magazine as a discursive space in which Blue Blouseniks were asked to imagine their relationships to each other, to the Blue Blouse organizational center in Moscow, and to the space of the Soviet state. Taken together, the magazines provide a rich imaginative geography of the Soviet Union during the NEP period.

In 1928, following a great deal of debate over the direction and value of the *Blue Blouse*, the magazine was closed. Officially it was incorporated into the magazine *Club Stage*, published by the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (VTsSPS). *Club Stage*, however, was devoted to the amateur production of full length stage plays incorporating the conventions and devices of early 20th century realism, and no attempt was made to make room for the forms or aesthetics of the *Blue Blouse* movement in the pages of that publication. The editorial and creative center of *Blue Blouse* managed to publish two more magazines with *Trud i kniga*, *Repertoire of the Blue Blouse* (1928, three issues) and *Small Forms of Club Spectacle* (1929-1930, 24 issues), but both of these ventures failed to perform the discursive role carried out by *Blue Blouse* and were, in the end, little more than anthologies of scripts staged by the professional Moscow troupes.

This chapter will examine the treatment of the *Blue Blouse* movement generated by *Blue Blouse*, focusing especially of the magazine's role as a specialized spatial discourse. This discourse can be productively analyzed as a part of the sphere that Lefebvre and Harvey call representations of space—"codes and knowledge that allow... material practices to be talked about and understood."²⁰⁰ The material on the pages of *Blue Blouse* shaped the spatial understanding of the movement, representing the movement to itself. Beginning with a consideration of the use of the discursive space provided by *Blue Blouse*—the contents of its pages—this chapter will proceed to examine the quality and methods of access to the discursive space that was available to readers and writers on the periphery, and the control over that space exercised by the magazine's editorial board and others. It will conclude with an exploration of the productive potential of this space—its ability to construct a discursive version of the *Blue*

²⁰⁰ Harvey 218.

Blouse movement that was, in many ways, as significant as the movement that existed in material space itself.²⁰¹

3.1 APPROPRIATION AND USE OF SPACE: ON THE PAGES OF *BLUE BLOUSE*

As the editors of the magazine make clear in their introduction to the first issue, they intended *Blue Blouse*, above all, to be a useful tool for its reader: “The issue of a living newspaper offered here is an exemplary model for the organization by workers clubs of this form of agitational-propagandistic work.”²⁰² Most of the material in its pages provided readers with ready to stage material, instruction or inspiration. This was not the only work performed by the magazine, however. In addition to providing resources for do-it-yourself living newspaper groups, the content of the magazine, through a variety of forms, established the authority of the Blue Blouse center in Moscow as the heart of a movement, chronicled the history of that movement, and celebrated its success.

Performance texts—parades, sketches, *raek* monologues, and *chastushki*—occupied the vast majority of pages of nearly every issue of *Blue Blouse*. While these scripts will be discussed in more detail in chapter three, a few words on their presentation are in order. The vast majority of texts during the magazines early years were, essentially, interchangeable parts within a living newspaper framework. Each issue included about a dozen texts, which could be mixed and matched by the troupe performing them—“In Memory of V.I. Lenin,” “An Evening Devoted to

²⁰¹ For further discussion of the discursive construction of the Soviet Union on the pages of Soviet periodicals, see Wolf, Erika Maria. “USSR in Construction: From Avant-garde to Socialist Realist Practice.” Diss. University of Michigan, 1999.

²⁰² “Zhivaia universal’naia gazeta Kul’totdela MGSPS ‘Siniia Bluza’.” *Siniia bluza* 1 (1924), 7.

the Liquidation of Illiteracy,” and “An Evening Devoted to Currency Reform” from number 1 were presented as entirely equivalent to “Three Internationals,” “Bar, Church and Club,” and “Nepman in the Country,” from number 2.²⁰³ The magazine did not even ascribe individual authorship to texts until 1926.²⁰⁴ Occasionally “special editions” of the Living Newspaper were printed, with all texts devoted to a theme: number 25 was devoted to the Red Army, number 26 to International Women’s Day, and number 61-62 to the 10th anniversary of the October Revolution. The ability of the magazine’s users to customize the content of their living newspapers to the specific needs and desires of their club was enhanced further by thematic indexes published in numbers 33 and 49, allowing readers easily to assemble an evening dedicated to international politics or village life (if, of course, they had all of the back issues of the magazine—which were for sale, as the back cover of the magazine usually advertised).²⁰⁵

In addition to scripts, musical scores were published in the magazine as well. While most of the texts in *Blue Blouse* were intended to be sung to the motifs of popular tunes, the magazine began occasionally publishing original songs in the third issue with “The Laborious Path” and the “Soldier’s Couplet” from the skit “Before and After.”²⁰⁶ The magazine’s readers complained about the infrequency with which new musical scores appeared, sometimes suggesting that prerevolutionary music was inappropriate to the work they were doing.²⁰⁷ This prompted a

²⁰³ “V pamiati V.I. Lenin,” *Siniaia bluza* 1 (1924), 11-23; “Večer, posviashchennyi likbezgramotnosti,” *Siniaia Bluza* 1(1924), 24-32; “Večer, posviashchennyi denezhnoi reforme,” *Siniaia bluza* 1 (1924), 33-38; “Tri internatsionala,” *Siniaia bluza* 2 (1924): 3-12; “Pivnaia, tserkov, i klub,” *Siniaia bluza* 2 (1924), 47-55; “Nepach v derevne,” *Siniaia bluza* 2 (1924), 24-29.

²⁰⁴ Instead, from the fifth issue the first page contained a list of authors who had contributed to the current issue. See, for example, “V sbornike prinimaiut uchastie,” *Siniaia bluza* 5 (1925): 2.

²⁰⁵ “Ukazatel’ repertuara,” *Siniaia bluza* 33 (1926): 53-61; “Ukazatel’ ‘Sinei Bluzy’,” *Siniaia bluza* 49 (1927): 46-48. The index from number 33 is reproduced in English in an appendix to Stourac and McCreery 293-299.

²⁰⁶ “Truden Put’,” *Siniaia bluza* 3 (1924), 89-91; “Kuplety den’shchika,” *Siniaia bluza* 3 (1924), 92-93.

²⁰⁷ See the editor’s response in number 11. Citing a lack of suitable revolutionary themes, they simultaneously express hope for the emergence of more revolutionary composers and suggest that bourgeois songs can be transformed when appropriated by the masses who sing them as they go about their day. “Pochtovy iashik,” *Siniaia bluza* 11 (1925), 53-54.

resolution at the First All Union Gathering of Blue Blouseniks devoted to the question of music, which called for “the editors to give as many more scores as possible, corresponding to texts printed in the magazine;” “the editors to issue collections of music periodically;” and for the movement as a whole to “strive towards gradually chasing “Musical homebrew” out of “Blue Blouse” productions, that is: Gypsy songs, contemporary operatic music, foxtrots, low-popular songs-- cautiously using them even in parodies.”²⁰⁸ While the magazine never ended up printing separate collections of music, the movement’s center did bring the composers Konstantin Listov and Sigizmund Kats into its ranks, publishing original music to accompany its sketches on a much more regular basis. By 1927, nearly every text featuring music was accompanied by an original score.

Blue Blouse also included some kind of instructional essay in nearly every issue of the magazine, beginning with a “Methodological directive” in the first issue, which indicated the desired composition of a living newspaper group, as well as a suggested structure for performance.²⁰⁹ Offering suggestions on acting technique, scriptwriting, and the maintenance of tempo, these short essays offered a means of transferring expertise from the Moscow center to the periphery of the movement. The subjects of instruction were wide ranging-- going so far as to detail how to build an avant-garde “noise orchestra” in a club.²¹⁰ Similarly the difficulty of tasks discussed ranged from putting on basic stage-makeup to costume designer Nina

²⁰⁸ “Rezoliutsiia o Muzike v ‘Sinei bluze’.” *Siniaia bluza* 23-24 (1925), 89. For a further discussion of “Musical homebrew”, see Stourac and McCreery 50-54; Starr, S. Fredrick. *Red & Hot: The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union*. New York: Limelight, 1994. 62; Uvarova, *Estradnyi Teatr* 120-121. For a discussion of these genres of popular music, see Stites, Richard. *Russian popular culture: Entertainment and society since 1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. 12-16.

²⁰⁹ “Metodicheskie ukazania.” *Siniaia bluza* 1 (1924), 8.

²¹⁰ Listov, Konstantin. “Eksenticheskii shumovoi orkestr ‘Sinei Bluzy,’” *Siniaia bluza* 40 (1927), 11.

Aizenberg's detailed notes on how to construct patterns for transformable costume elements from her avant-garde sketches (Figure 19).²¹¹



Figure 19. Nina Aizenberg. Costume design for the sketch “Red Army” with annotations describing how to sew the costume. *Siniia bluza* 59-69 (1927), 2.²¹²

The scripts, scores, and instructional material were supplemented by photographs of the central Moscow Blue Blouse troupes in performance, often dozens per issue. While these photographs were ostensibly intended to aid local troupes in performance—they were frequently accompanied by costume sketches or charts of the signs that needed to be created—they also served as an advertisement for the Moscow groups themselves. This function seemed to grow in importance, rather than diminish as the movement grew: while in the early numbers of the magazine photos almost always were printed alongside their accompanying texts (Figure 20), by the middle of 1927 the magazine regularly printed photographs with no relationship to

²¹¹ Aizenberg, Nina. “Kostiumnaia aplikatsiia na stsene i kak ee delat’,” *Siniia bluza* 59-60 (1927), 2-4.

²¹² The Shirt Transforms from a sailor’s uniform, to a pilot’s, to that of a soldier in the red army. This sketch was filmed for a newsreel, *Sovkinozhurnal* 8/117 (1928), RGAKFD 1529. See the discussion of this piece in chapter 4.

performance texts contained in the same issue (Figure 21). Rather than offering guidance, these illustrations tended to emphasize the prowess (often acrobatic) of the central group.



Figure 20. Image from “NEPman in the Countryside,” which accompanied the text of that script. *Siniaia bluza 2* (1924), 28.

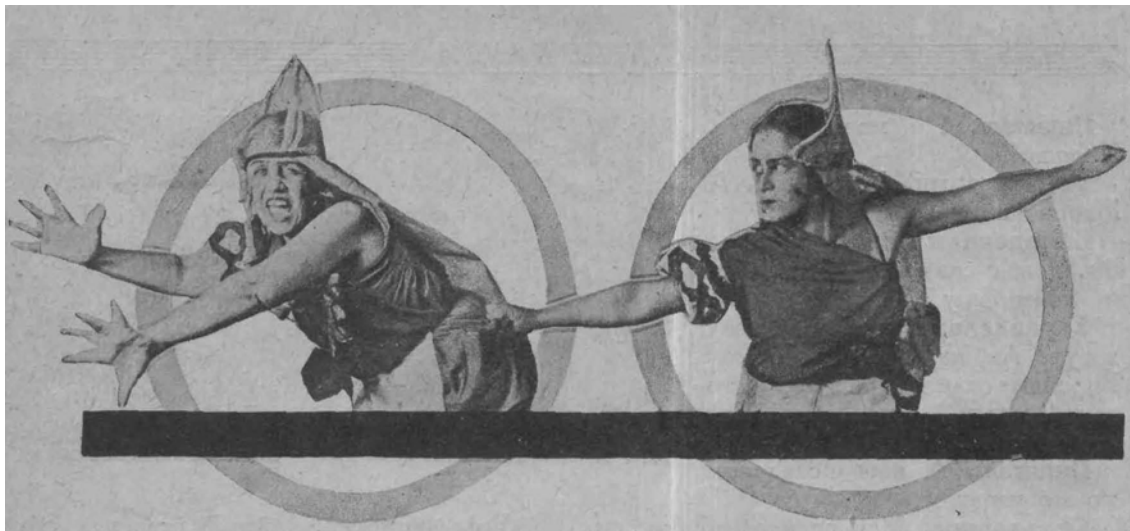


Figure 21. Image from “Carmen,” illustrating the text of “Niuta Bessonova,” *Siniaia bluza 67-68* (1927): 14.

In addition to the photographs of Moscow Blue Blouse troupes, however, the magazine devoted increasingly large amounts of space to a visual documentation of the movement itself. Beginning with a group photo of the “Red Smithy” troupe from Krivoi Rog in the Donbas region

published in number 18 (Figure 22), *Blue Blouse* began devoting more and more space to photographs of local troupes.²¹³ Moving beyond printing photographs included in correspondence with the magazine, the editors issued a call to their readers to send in photographs in number 25: “Comrade Blue Blouseniks! Send in photographs of moments from productions for inclusion in our magazine.”²¹⁴ The call was successful, and the rate at which photographs of local troupes appeared in the magazine increased from about one per issue to between ten and twenty per issue by the end of 1926.²¹⁵ The magazine periodically issued new calls for photographs, stressing their preference for images from performances: “Only send photographs of moments from productions, and not of the group”; “Comrade Blue Blouseniks! We await photographs of your work”; “Don’t send photographs from your passport!”²¹⁶ While these requests had some effect, and the magazine featured images of provincial performances more regularly later in its run (Figure 23) the preponderance of images were group portraits, suggesting that to local groups, participation, itself may have been what was most important.²¹⁷ To offset the static nature of these group portraits, the magazine regularly combined them with industrial motifs—trains, smokestacks, propellers—creating a dynamic montage that was much more emblematic of the transformative power their movement was claiming (Figure 24).

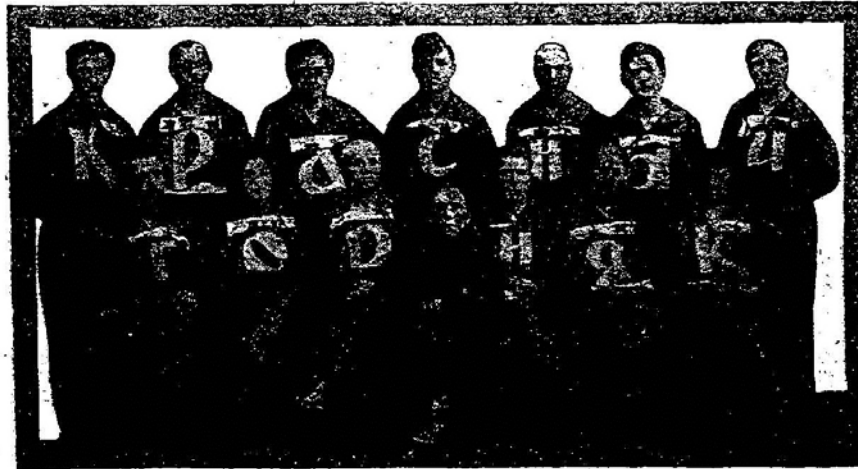
²¹³ These photographs probably provided Blue Blouse troupes in the provinces with an opportunity more fully to integrate themselves into local workers clubs, as amateur photograph was another activity that the clubs encouraged.

²¹⁴ Notice on the inside of the front cover, *Siniaia bluza* 25 (1926).

²¹⁵ See, for instance, number 47-48, which features photographs of troupes from Alapaevsk, Orel, Spasskaia Shkola, Voronezh, the “Dnepr” factory, Volgoda, Leningrad, Iaroslavskaiia Uezd’, Novye Liali, Pologi station on the Ekaterinoslav rail line, Pochelsk, Perm’, and Rodnikovsk. *Siniaia bluza* 47-47 (1926).

²¹⁶ “Otvechaem,” *Siniaia bluza* 26 (1926): 63; *Siniaia bluza* 30 (1926), 38; *Siniaia bluza* 34 (1926), 55.

²¹⁷ As late as number 74, the editorial board issued notices illustrating the difference between “What we need” and “What we don’t need” in the composition of photographs from local troupes. “Chego nam he nado/chto nam nado,” *Siniaia bluza* 74 (1928), 61-62.



Гор. Кривой Рог.—Живая газета Донбасса „Красный Горняк“.

Figure 22. “Krivoi Rog.- Donbas Living Newspaper ‘Red Miner,’ *Siniia bluza* 18 (1925), 55.



Figure 23. Living Newspaper “Blue Blouse” from Zlatoust in performance, *Siniia bluza* 33 (1926), 63.



Figure 24. Red Iron-roller” from Alapevsk, *Siniaia Bluza* 47-48 (1926), 16.

If the photographs of provincial troupes celebrated the breadth of the movement, a second type of image frequently used in *Blue Blouse* celebrated the magazine itself. Beginning in early 1926, blank space at the end of articles was frequently filled by montages, including images of the covers of *Blue Blouse*. While the first montages were extremely simple in their layout (Figure 25), they gradually grew in complexity. The cover of issue number 52, for example, displayed recent issues of *Blue Blouse* arranged into a pattern redolent of the constructivist aesthetics that the movement frequently celebrated (Figure 26). As the magazine neared its end, these images appeared much more frequently, with the magazines arranged into the shapes of question marks, letters and even pine trees.²¹⁸ While these images occasionally had practical purposes, such as illustrating advertisements for back issues of the magazine (Figure 27), they also served as a vibrant illustration of the magazine’s success and as a metonym for its output.

²¹⁸ The question mark first appeared on the back cover of *Siniaia bluza* 69-79 (1927), while the pine tree made its first appearance in *Siniaia bluza* 78 (1928), 44.



Figure 25. Montage of Blue Blouse covers, *Siniia bluza* 29 (1926), 60.

It should not be surprising that these images appeared much more frequently as the magazine was facing closure, often appearing alongside pages of endorsements from leading artistic and political figures. Number 75, for example, collected, under the heading “what they are saying about us in the center,” statements from Semen Budyenny (the leader of the Red Calvary during the Civil War and “an honorary Blue Blousenik”), Olga Kameneva (the wife of Lev Kamenev, sister of Leon Trotsky, and former head of the theater section of the Commissariat of Enlightenment), Anatoly Lunacharsky (the Commissar of Enlightenment), authors Ernst Toller and Fedor Gladkov, circus performer Vladimir Durov, and about a dozen workers at various Moscow factories.²¹⁹ This celebration of *Blue Blouse* did not end with the magazine’s closure. Montages featuring covers of *Blue Blouse* continued to be printed in *Repertoire of the Blue Blouse* and *Small Forms of Club Spectacle* until the end of those magazine’s runs as well, now serving as a memorial to the success of *Blue Blouse* rather than an advertisement of it.²²⁰

²¹⁹ “Chto govoriat o nas v tsentre.” *Siniia bluza* 75 (1928), 54-57.

²²⁰ See, for example *Repertuar sinei bluzy* 1 (1928), 11, 50, and 55; *Malye formy klubnogo zrelischa* 7 (1929), 17. They also published a handbook on how to run a Blue Blouse collective in 1927 and an anthology of Blue Blouse scripts in 1929. Iuzhanin, B. *Spravochnik cinebluznika na 1917 god*. Moskva: Trud i kniga, 1927; Iuzhanin, B. and Mrozovskii, V. *Sovetskaia estrada: sbornik repertuara Moskovskogo teatra ‘Siniia bluza’*. Moskva: Teakinopechat’, 1929.



Figure 26. The Cover of Blue Blouse 52, *Siniaia bluza 52* (1927).



Figure 27. Advertisement: 40 issues for 5 rubles, 50 kopeks, *Siniaia Bluza 75* (1928), 42.

While the vast majority of the discursive space that *Blue Blouse* constituted was occupied in one way or another towards theatrical practice, shaping local productions through the publication of scripts, designs, models, and instructions, significant portions of that space were devoted to a celebration of the movement itself. Photographs of local troupes ran alongside others, demonstrating the virtuosity of the performers at the Moscow center. Even as the

magazine's future was in question, pages of accolades were printed in every issue. Authors and editors working in Moscow, at the center of the movement, generated most of this material, but they were not the sole contributors to the magazine—*Blue Blouse*, as we shall see in the following section, was structured to allow its readers on the periphery some access to its discursive space.

3.2 ACCESSIBILITY AND DISTANCIATION: “WE ANSWER”

Blue Blouse was, from the beginning, a magazine with ambitions that were state-wide in scope. During the early days of the publication, however, these ambitions were limited to providing material written by the Moscow Blue Blouses to workers interested in staging living newspapers in their own, local clubs. While from the first issue the editors of the magazine recognized that the diversity of the Soviet Union meant that the relevance of texts would vary from place to place, the magazine began as a unidirectional discourse, written in Moscow and read elsewhere. This relationship gradually changed and Blue Blouseniks from outside of Moscow began to receive space in the pages of *Blue Blouse*, in photographs, letters, and, occasionally, in the repertoire.

Although the first issue of *Blue Blouse* was printed by the press of the MGSPS, a Moscow organization, the size of the run—10,000 copies—indicates quite clearly that it was intended for readers in clubs well outside of Moscow itself.²²¹ The introductory comments in the issue indicate this as well, stressing the need for productions of the scripts to address local

²²¹ *Siniaia Bluza* 1 (1924), 2. It was also larger than the usual run of 7,000 copies in the magazine's later years, when the editorial board explicitly considered *Blue Blouse* the central organ of a state-wide movement. In 1925 there were 450 workers' clubs in Moscow. Hatch, “Hangouts” 98.

conditions. In his overview of the living newspaper form, G. Serebrennikov insists that, “The living newspaper is above all a local organ-- it should pour local juice to serve local strength.”²²²

Similarly, in their notes on staging a living newspaper the editors of *Blue Blouse* insist that,

In the selection of themes for a [living] newspaper, local color must not be forgotten, even for one second. The success of a [living] newspaper hangs entirely on its everyday-ness, on its closeness to the interests and demands of the listeners. A large section of the [living] newspaper should be reserved for political campaigns in general, while an even larger one [should be set aside for] campaigns that are local.²²³

Despite this insistence on the importance of the local, the issue consists completely of texts written by authors working in Moscow. While most of these texts dealt with issues that possessed a broad relevance—the death of Lenin, foreign affairs, currency reform and illiteracy, the issue also contained explicitly Moscow-centered texts, like a comic monologue dealing with adapting to urban life in the socialist capital.

This situation, in which access to the pages of *Blue Blouse* was exclusively available to the Moscow group, began to change in 1925, when the magazine published a “Call to the Living Newspapers of the USSR” in their first issue of the year. In this announcement resulting from the Blue Blouse’s decision to publish their magazine on a regular basis, they announced for the first time their desire to become “the center of the living newspaper movement, spanning as wide as all of the clubs of the USSR” and proposed two new features for their magazine aimed at promoting “living and durable connections with local groups,” the rubrics “Chronicle” and “Mail Box.” Articles published under “Chronicle” were to chart the activities of Blue Blouse groups

²²² Serebrennikov, G. “Zhivaia Gazeta v rabote kluba,” *Siniaia bluza* 1 (1924): 5.

²²³ “Zhivaia universal'naia gazeta kul'totdela MGSPS ‘Siniaia Bluza’,” *Siniaia bluza* 1 (1924): 7.

around the country, while the “Mail Box” was to become “the division of comradely communication on all topics connected with living newspaper work.” The call also requested that local groups send in their best scripts and that they inform the editors “of their existence, discuss their origin, their work, and perspectives.”²²⁴ The Issue also featured the first installment of “Chronicle,” detailing the establishment of a Blue Blouse circle at the Moscow factory, “Spartak” and the success of “Na Vakhte,” an affiliate of the Blue Blouse, on their multi-city tour of the Volga.²²⁵ The first “Mail Box” appeared in the following issue, although it took some time for the feature to take on substance; the first installment consisted entirely of responses to three letters regarding the proper procedure for subscribing to the magazine.²²⁶

Within a few issues, however, the editors were consistently using “Mail Box” to offer concrete advice to authors who had sent in material from the provinces. Despite the apparently large number of manuscripts received by the editors, it appears that only one short play was actually published by *Blue Blouse* over the course of 1925. The script, “Face Towards the Village,” was submitted by an author working in Briansk under the pseudonym Emle. Informing Emle of the acceptance of his work, the editors praised it for its “literateness” and “suitability,” but offered several pieces of advice for future submissions, including “The use of antiquated words should be avoided,” “works should be not only literary, but also sharply satirical,” and “write shorter.”²²⁷ For his effort, Emle was paid an honorarium.²²⁸

²²⁴ “Prizyv k zhivym gazetam SSSR,” *Siniaia bluza* 5 (1925), 61.

²²⁵ “Khronika,” *Siniaia bluza* 5 (1925), 62-63.

²²⁶ “Pochtovyi iashik,” *Siniaia bluza* 6 (1925), 62.

²²⁷ “Pochtovyi iashik,” *Siniaia bluza* 12 (1925), 58-59. Emle is not a word in Russian but, as Vladimir Padunov has suggested, the pseudonym is probably derived from the pronunciation of the letters M and L, the initials of the family names of Marx and Lenin. Another of Emle’s (real name Polonskii) scripts, “Behind the Factory Wall,” was accepted, but never appeared as the magazine slowed its rate of publication during the summer. For the acceptance, see “Pochtovyi iashik,” *Siniaia bluza* 7 (1925), 52. For the explanation of the change, see “Pochtovyi iashik,” *Siniaia bluza* 14 (1925), 64. “Face Towards the Village” was published as “City, Don’t be a Scoundrel-- Turn Your

Emle, however, was the exception. *Blue Blouse's* "Mail Box" was filled with responses to submissions, which had fallen short of the magazine's standards. Some scripts were rejected on purely artistic grounds: the alternate lyrics to the song "City and Country" written by Klunikov from Moscow were "weak;" the work written by Krasnovskii from Barnaul was "weak technically and literarily;" and the "Entre" submitted by Medvedev from Vitebsk was "difficult to pronounce[:] the words need to be more precise, more resounding."²²⁹ The exact wording of the responses, however, suggests that this general lack of quality might be indicative of the success of the magazine at incorporating and encouraging extremely undereducated citizens of the Soviet Union to participate in the creation of culture. Their advice to Krasnovskii, for example, suggests the low level of his composition skills. In order to improve, they write, he should "read the classics and contemporary revolutionary poets. Connect with the local organization of proletarian writers. And with a little persistent effort you will be able to reach the level of literary technique needed to appear in print."²³⁰

In addition to limiting local playwrights' access to the pages of *Blue Blouse* on artistic grounds, the editors evidently had quite strict standards regarding the content of the material that they received, a dissatisfaction that manifested itself in repeated calls for submissions: "To all comrades writing in local living newspapers: Become Blouse-Correspondents [bluzkori]. Send in texts on quotidian themes and the most successful texts from your productions. If it fits, we'll

Face Towards the Village," in *Blue Blouse* 13. "Ne bud', gorod, podletsom, povernis' k sely litsom," *Siniaia bluza* 13 (1925), 28-32.

²²⁸ "Pochtovyi iashik," *Siniaia bluza* 14 (1925), 64.

²²⁹ See the responses in "Pochtovyi iashik," *Siniaia bluza* 7 (1925), 52; "Pochtovyi iashik," *Siniaia Bluza* 13 (1925), 60; and "Otvechaem," *Siniaia bluza* 21-22 (1925), 77.

²³⁰ It is possible that Krasnovskii's difficulties stemmed not from his difficulties with composition in general, but with composition in a second language-- Barnaul is located within the Altai region. "Pochtovyi iashik," *Siniaia bluza* 13 (1924), 60.

use it.”²³¹ The insistence that submitted texts be on quotidian themes essentially reserved texts on statewide campaigns to *Blue Blouse*’s core authors in Moscow. After receiving a sketch called “Hands off China,” submitted by a Blue Blousenik from Kazan', the magazine rejected it with the admonition, “do-it-yourself theatre involves, not only the overdone themes of a world-wide scale, but also the study of everyday, local sketches.... Write in the language that surrounds you.”²³² This focus on the local, however, could not result in a product that was too specific. The work of Rybkin from Leningrad could “be used only in a local living newspaper.” In order to be published in *Blue Blouse*, he needed to write “material on more general themes.”²³³ The acceptance of Emle’s play illustrates nicely the combination of local and general that the editors were looking for. Finally published as “City, Don’t Be a Scoundrel—Turn Your Face Towards the Country,” it centered around a meeting of workers and peasants regarding the obligations the urban proletariat had to bring enlightenment to the peasants, opposing the “the moonshiner, pope and kulak... [who] submerge the village in darkness.”²³⁴ Dealing with the relationship between the city and the country, the play was on a general theme, but one that benefitted immensely from the local perspective of an author from outside of Moscow.

As *Blue Blouse* entered 1926, its format changed slightly, putting even more emphasis on the scripts and songs that it was publishing. From the final issue of 1925 on, the authors of texts received a byline, rather than inclusion on a general list of authors involved in the issue. Music to accompany works was published more frequency as well. This emphasis on the product emanating from Moscow led to a subtle de-emphasis of the work being done in the provinces. “Chronicle” disappeared and “Mail Box,” now under the title “We Answer,” was only printed in

²³¹ “Pochtovyi iashik,” *Siniaia bluza* 7 (1925), 52.

²³² “Pochtovyi iashik,” *Siniaia bluza* 13 (1925), 61.

²³³ “Pochtovyi iashik,” *Siniaia bluza* 7 (1925), 52.

²³⁴ “Ne bud', gorod, podletsom, povernis' k sely litsom,” *Siniaia bluza* 13 (1925), 28-32; 29.

two issues published during the first eleven months of the year.²³⁵ While the number of scripts published after being submitted by authors from the provinces did not rise significantly, the attribution of authorship drew additional attention to those that were accepted.²³⁶ The only significant presence that local living newspapers had on the pages of *Blue Blouse* were the photographs of troupes that were becoming an increasingly common feature of the magazine.

This neglect was addressed with some force at the Second All-Union Gathering of Blue Blouseniks, which took place in Moscow in October 1926. The resolutions passed by the gathering contained a number of points that were intended to govern the magazine's relationship to the movement's associates at the local level. Article Two called for the organization of a registry of Blue Blouse groups "wanting to work following the example and methods of the center," which would be published in the magazine. Article Three stipulated that each registered group should subscribe to *Blue Blouse*, with one subscription for every ten members. Article Five established that "in every issue should be a section called "At the local level," in which the local needs of blueblouseniks will be served broadly and attentively," and Article Eleven reaffirmed the role of *Blue Blouse* as "the central organ of the Blue Blouse movement." From this point on, much greater care would be taken to ensure local groups better access to the discursive space provided by the journal.²³⁷

²³⁵ The last installment of "Chronicle" was published in number 19. "Mail box" appeared in numbers 26 and 40. Without access to the magazine's correspondence from this period, it cannot be said for certain that this de-emphasis was the result of decisions made by the editorial board, rather than a substantial decrease in letters written to the magazine and reports received from local groups. The large number of photographs of local troupes that were printed in the magazine, however, seems to suggest that this was not the case, and that *Blue Blouse* continued to receive significant correspondence from their local affiliates.

²³⁶ Another script co-written by Emle (Polonskii) was published, as were lyrics by V. Sonin from Evstranovka station on the South-Eastern railway. Sonin, V. "Chastushki klubno-kruzhkovye," *Siniia bluza* 43 (1926), 46.

²³⁷ "Rezoliutsiia, priniataia 2-m Vsesoiuznym soveshchaniem sinebluznikov ii/X-1926 goda," *Siniia bluza* 44 (1926), 61-62.

The increased commitment to local access was immediately evident. Several pages in the next few issues were devoted to responses to letters and the first installment of “At the local level” appeared before the year was out.²³⁸ Substantially different from what had been printed under the “Chronicle” rubric, “At the Local Level” consisted of two-hundred word descriptions of individual troupes, detailing their working conditions, their audience, their repertoire, and their relationship with the magazine. The first installment, promising to present “The Blouses in person and inside out” began with a submission from “the deep woods”:

“We are located 45 versts from town in the deep woods,” reports the culture commission of the factory committee of the chemical factory “Shugaikha” (Ivanovo-Voznesensk region, Kishneshemsk department). The living newspaper collective arose from the initiative of the cultural worker A. Kuznetsov.

The participants are workers from the work-benches. Having carried out 18 presentations, they have served more than 1000 spectators—workers and peasants. The public enjoys reconfigured marches and group pyramids.

From the Blue Blouse repertoire we have successfully used the scripts: “The Worker Who Hangs Out At the Club Is Not Dumb,” “Culture and Philistinism,” “Co-op-trio,” “A Happy Life Doesn’t Come From Forty-Degree Days,” and *raeks*. Thanking the collective for their performance at the village of Vzvozenikii at the annual festival of the volunteer fire-department, the authorities later wrote, “The population from the surrounding countryside, having taken

²³⁸ Previously the “Mail Box” section had generally been one page of the magazine, occasionally taking up a second as well. The section, now called “We Respond,” was given three pages in number 45, and two pages in numbers 46, 49, 50 and 51. “Otvechaem,” *Siniaia bluza* 45 (1926), 59-61; “Otvechaem,” *Siniaia bluza* 46 (1926), 55-56; “Otvechaem,” *Siniaia bluza* 49 (1927), 43-44; “Otvechaem,” *Siniaia bluza* 50 (1927), 48-49; “Otvechaem,” *Siniaia bluza* 51 (1927), 40-41. The first instance of “At the Local Level” appeared in number 46. “Na Mestakh,” *Siniaia bluza* 46 (1926), 53-54.

interest in the living newspaper, left their cows un-milked until the end of the spectacle.”

To which the editors humorously responded, “Very good comrades—only why are you arming cows against the Blue Blouse?”²³⁹

These detailed accounts were complemented by another feature that was dictated by the resolution of the Second All-Union Gathering of Blue Blouseniks, the list of Blue Blouse collectives that had sent in the registration form printed in number 44. While the descriptions of individual collectives featured in “At the Local Level” provided some depth to the understanding of the activities of individual groups, the list of registered Blue Blouse collectives, which was printed on the final page of every issue from the second number of 1927 to the end of the magazine’s run, was an ongoing illustration of the movement’s depth. Each entry detailed the troupe’s name, the names of its directors, its location, and—occasionally—other information, such as the name of the factory it was associated with, the Republic, within which it was located, or the language the group performed in. Because the groups were added in the order that their registration forms were received, the geographical randomness of the list underlined the ubiquity of the movement.²⁴⁰

The magazine’s renewed commitment to the local went beyond responding to letters more frequently and providing a space on their pages for local groups to share their experiences. The end of 1926 was also marked by a burst in the publication of scripts submitted from authors in the provinces. In the final two issues of 1926 *Blue Blouse* printed sketches on industrial

²³⁹ “Na mestakh.” *Siniaia bluza* 46 (1926): 53. “Co-op-trio” is published in *Blue Blouse* 14. “Koop-trio.” *Siniaia bluza* 14. 1925, 17-20.

²⁴⁰ The first five groups to register, for example, were from Viazniki station in Vladimir province, Bobruisk in Belarus’, Mine 28-29 at Shchetov station in Donbass, Sias'stroi in Leningrad province, and Stavropol’ on the Caucasian Isthmus. “Zaregistrirovany i poluchili svoi nomera sleduiushchie zhivogazetnye kruzhki,” *Siniaia bluza* 50 (1927), 45-46.

discipline and inter-ethnic cooperation written by authors from Ivanovo-Voznesenk, Minsk, and Tver'.²⁴¹ While this rate was not maintained over the next year, more plays from outside of Moscow were printed in these two issues than the total number that had appeared up to that point. A list of the Blouse personnel published in the middle of 1927 underscored the symbolic importance of these authors to the editors of *Blue Blouse* and the movement as a whole. While the list of authors was only partial, all four of the provincial authors were included, with their hometowns listed in parentheses after their names.²⁴²

The final new feature from the period immediately following the Second All-Union Gathering of Blue Blouseniks, also intended to service the movement at the local level, started appearing in 1927. Beginning with the first issue of that year, *Blue Blouse* began publishing a pull-out insert called “Blue Blousenik: The Organ of the Blue Blouse Movement.” Formatted like a newspaper, with horizontal orientation and its own masthead, “Blue Blousenik” appeared once a month in the center of the magazine. The insert contained short announcements regarding the activity of Blue Blouse troupes, reprints of articles from local newspapers, and even more responses to letters. The first installment contained announcements of recently formed collectives in Viatka and Kurgan, a report on the performance of the Green Blouses—a Moscow troupe composed of orphaned children—selections from articles on living newspapers published in Vladimir and Ulan-Ude, and a discussion of the upcoming tours of the professional Moscow troupes.²⁴³

²⁴¹ Ivanov, M. “Nezametnyi geroi,” *Siniaia bluza* 46 (1926), 23-30; Kurdin, D. “Pogranichnaia okazii-- polubyl'-- polufantazmiia,” *Siniaia bluza* 47-48 (1926), 25-33; Kurdin, D. “Nash tyr,” *Siniaia bluza* 47-48 (1926), 52-56; Kobelev, L. “Len', griaz' i nedistsiplinu-- goni prikladom v spinu,” *Siniaia bluza* 47-48 (1926), 57-68.

²⁴² “Kto delaet ‘Siniuiu Bluzu’?” *Siniaia bluza* 65-66 (1927), 64.

²⁴³ “Sinebluznik,” *Siniaia bluza* 49 (1927), 24-25.

The final year of *Blue Blouse*'s publication saw local groups gain even more access to the pages of the magazine. As the debates about the direction of the Blue Blouse and the desirability of the movement's continued existence were heating up, a number of essays contributing to the discussion were printed. The first, submitted by P. Iu. Vechorskii from Nizhnyi Tal'dy, was a four page critique of the movement's trajectory towards *estrada* and operetta, calling for a re-emphasis on the folk-based *raek* and *chastushki* forms, and an expansion of the departments of the magazine dealing with local troupes. The editors stressed in a note appended to the article that Vechorskii's argument was "pertinent and healthy criticism, to which it was essential to listen, both in the center and in the provinces," and called for an exchange of experiences regarding the construction of Variety theatre in the clubs.²⁴⁴ This call was met by a flurry of responses, which were published under the heading "What worries us." While these contributions to the larger debate surrounding the Blue Blouse movement varied in their opinions regarding the criticisms leveled by Vechorskii—E. N. Belov from Rechitsa in Belarus insisted that formal evolution was inevitable, while Shil'nikovskii from Velikii Ustiug stressed his total agreement with Vechorskii's position—all were in agreement that the Blue Blouse was vital to the cultural life of their town, and all insisted that the magazine was essential to that.²⁴⁵ As Shil'nikovskii put it, "We, local workers, must say that we need you [*Blue Blouse*] like... air."²⁴⁶

As the magazine approached its closure, the profile of local members of the movement within its pages increased even more, as their support was marshaled by the editors in their campaign to continue publication. Reports on the activities of local groups now featured

²⁴⁴ Vechorskii, P. Iu. "Chto diktuets zhizn': k 5 godu nashogo sushchestvovaniia," *Siniaia bluza* 69-70 (1927), 58-61.

²⁴⁵ "Chto nas volnuet," *Siniaia bluza* 73 (1928), 53-59.

²⁴⁶ Shil'nikovskii. "Bol'she vnimaniia malym formam," *Siniaia bluza* 73 (1928), 58.

individual portraits of provincial troupes' directors and advisors.²⁴⁷ The penultimate issue featured a selection of texts under the new rubrik of "Local Creativity," including an "Entre" by an author from the Gavriilo-Posadskaia factory and songs from Odessa and Ufa.²⁴⁸

Despite the relatively high level of access that provincial Blue Blouseniks had to the magazine's pages and, therefore, to the discursive space of the movement, one important form of distanciation was never adequately addressed by *Blue Blouse*. Although the magazine had readers in every national republic and the movement involved troupes working in more than a dozen languages, every word published in *Blue Blouse* was written in Russian. This explicitly encouraged readers to translate their work into other languages: in the answer to a letter asking if translating Blue Blouse work into Ukrainian was permissible the editors wrote, "Translation into Ukrainian is completely desirable and it is essential to adapt works to local conditions."²⁴⁹ Of course this was easier said than done: in 1927 the Ukrainian magazine *Village Theatre* received a letter from a Blue Blouse troupe that had all but given up on account of the difficulty of translating Russian sketches.²⁵⁰ The exclusive use of the Russian language created a barrier between the magazine and a substantial portion of its readers. While this barrier was clearly not insurmountable (and may not have been substantially different in practice than a similar barrier created by the country's still-high rate of illiteracy), it undermined the horizontal equality toward which the movement strived.

Just as *Blue Blouse* was reaching the end of its run, it finally managed to achieve the broad level of access that it had aimed at from the beginning. This was clearly due in large part to the greater availability of quality material from the periphery that resulted from the spread of

²⁴⁷ See, for example, "Gde, chto, kak," *Siniia bluza* 74 (1928), 62-64.

²⁴⁸ "Tvorchestvo na mestakh," *Siniia bluza* 77 (1928), 54-56.

²⁴⁹ "Otvechaem." *Siniia bluza* 49 (1927), 34.

²⁵⁰ "Iak bulo i iak e." *Sil's'kyi teatr* 7 (1927). 40.

the movement and the skill that its cadres derived from years of experience. But it was also a result of the demand by members of the movement working in troupes on the periphery that they be heard, as was made evident by the resolutions of the Second All-Union Gathering of Blue Blouseniks—a demand that was met much more frequently as these troupes were used to justify the Blue Blouse’s existence.

3.3 DOMINATION AND CONTROL OF SPACE: FROM THE EDITORS

Access to the discursive space of the magazine was controlled by the editorial board of *Blue Blouse*, headed from the beginning by the group’s founder Boris Iuzhanin²⁵¹. Early in the magazine’s publication Iuzhanin’s authority was legitimated, it seems, by little other than the fact that he was the founder of the Blue Blouse. This had substance, however, because of the inclusion of the Blue Blouse movement within the organizational structure of the MGSPS, tying the movement to the trade unions and giving it access to their press. The importance of this connection is underscored by the frequency with which the magazine highlighted its connection to the Union. The title page of the first issue, for example, read “Blue Blouse/ Living Universal Newspaper/ of the Cultural Section of the MGSPS,” and the association was frequently referenced in the texts for entry marches and finales: “Her [*Blue Blouse*] printer is the MGSPS/ she offers everyone something of interest”; “We have been sent on important business/ to you by the MGSPS.”²⁵² They even cite the association in a poem advertising the magazine on the back

²⁵¹ The Board consisted of four members, including Iuzhanin, Viktor Mrozovskii, and L. Baushev. “Kak, rabotaet ‘Siniiaia Bluza’,” *Siniiaia bluza* 5 (1925), 3; *Siniiaia bluza* 71-72 (1928), 11.

²⁵² *Siniiaia bluza* 1 (1924), 1; “Parad ‘Sinei Bluzy’,” *Siniiaia bluza* 5 (1925), 5-6; “Marsh ‘Sinei Bluzy’,” *Siniiaia bluza* 12 (1925), 60.

cover of number 2: “So take it, with no worry you’ll waste your money-/ this is good material for staging in the club./ Otherwise, why the devil/ Would the MGSPS publish it.”²⁵³ The editors of *Blue Blouse* frequently mitigated these claims to authority within the living newspaper movement, stressing the inadequacies of their work and the fact that they, too, were searching for better ways of creating theatre appropriate for the clubs.²⁵⁴ Nevertheless, they insisted, they were playing an important role, shaping the work of the clubs of Moscow and the clubs of the provinces and taming the “chaos” of the living newspaper movement.²⁵⁵

One of *Blue Blouse*’s most prominent tactics for taming this chaos was narrating the history of the movement in its pages. The first major attempt to relate coherently the movement’s history was number 23-34, a double issue honoring the group’s second anniversary, which published no production related material, whatsoever, instead devoting 84 pages to three long articles. The first detailed the organization’s early history, another discussed the texts issued by *Blue Blouse*, while the third was a discussion of music within the movement, agitating with the slogan “down with Gypsy parodies, give us revolutionary melodies!”²⁵⁶ Organizing the movement’s history and production into a coherent narrative, the authors presented the Blue Blouse as an organic outgrowth of mass culture, aligned with “October in the Theatres,” Meyerhold’s platform for revolutionary theatre.²⁵⁷ These new theatrical forms demanded by the

²⁵³ *Siniaia bluza* 2 (1924), 98.

²⁵⁴ “Pochtovyi iashik,” *Siniaia bluza* 12 (1925), 58.

²⁵⁵ “Vsem zhivogazetchikam,” *Siniaia bluza* 11, (1925), 3-4.

²⁵⁶ Liubin, V. “Dva goda rabota zhivoi gazety ‘Siniaia Bluza’,” *Siniaia bluza* 23-24 (1925), 4-26; Churilin, T.

“Literaturnaia chast’ ‘Sinei Bluzy’ slovo v svoei rabote,” *Siniaia bluza* 23-24 (1925), 27-65; Liubimov, A.

“Muzikalnoe oformlenie tekstov ‘Sinei Bluzy’,” *Siniaia bluza* 23-24 (1925), 66-83. The slogan appeared on page 73. Significant portions of Liubimov’s essay has been translated in Stourac and McCreery 50-54.

²⁵⁷ V. Liubin, for example, argues simply that “The new forms were born from mass work” and cites Forreger, Meyerhold and Eisenstein as the Blue Blouse’s predecessors. Liubin, V. “Dva goda rabota zhivoi gazety ‘Siniaia Bluza’,” *Siniaia bluza* 23-24 (1925), 4-26; 7. For an excellent account of “October in the Theatre”, see Leach 59-69. See also, Zolotnitskii, David. *Budni i prazdniki teatral’nogo oktiabria*. Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1978; Zolotnitskii, David. *Zori teatral’nogo oktiabria*. Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1976.

revolution and provided by the Blue Blouse were occupying the place of the old, long-form theatre which had “finally outlived itself.”²⁵⁸

This assessment of the Blue Blouse and their work was followed a little more than a year later by an article by the journalist Iaroslav Gamza occupying nearly 40 pages of numbers 50 and 51.²⁵⁹ Dividing the history of the movement into five different periods, he describes the “enormous path” tread by the Blue Blouse as an evolution, over the course of which the sparse effectiveness of early living newspapers was gradually amplified by the theatricalization generated by the addition of talented artists to the movement’s cadres.²⁶⁰ Gamza insisted that the Blue Blouse was the embodiment of a true Leninist aesthetics, citing Lenin’s statement that “[a]rt should arise, with its deepest roots in the bedrock of the broad mass of working people. It should be understood by these masses and loved by them. It should unite the feelings, thoughts, and will of these masses, elevating them.”²⁶¹ This alone, however was not enough: the quality of provincial productions was often poor, and never reached the level of the work done in Moscow. Gamza argued that this could only be rectified by a stronger centralization of the living movement: “this demands a coordination of the living newspaper movement from the bottom to the top, from the lowest club newspaper to the central living newspaper laboratory of the Moscow Blue Blouse into a united, harmonious organization.”²⁶²

The final major essay on the history of the movement that was published in *Blue Blouse* was formalist critic Osip Brik’s account of the early history of the Moscow Blue Blouse’s work

²⁵⁸ Liubin, V. “Dva goda rabota zhivoi gazety ‘Siniaia Bluza’,” *Siniaia bluza* 23-24 (1925), 4-26; 7.

²⁵⁹ Gamza, Iaroslav. “Siniaia Bluza: opyt analiza,” *Siniaia bluza* 50 (1927), 1-23; Gamza, Ia. “Siniaia Bluza: opyt analiza,” *Siniaia bluza* 51 (1927), 1-14.

²⁶⁰ Gamza, Ia. “Siniaia Bluza: opyt analiza,” *Siniaia bluza* 51 (1927), 1-14; 8.

²⁶¹ Gamza, Ia. “Siniaia Bluza: opyt analiza,” *Siniaia bluza* 51 (1927), 1-14; 14. The quote is from Clara Zetkin’s *Reminiscences of Lenin*. New York: International, 1934. For a discussion of the statements by Lenin that Zetkin recorded and their relationship to the rest of Lenin’s writing on art and literature, see Solomon, Maynard. *Marxism and Art*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979, 166-167.

²⁶² Gamza, Ia. “Siniaia Bluza: opyt analiza,” *Siniaia bluza* 51 (1927), 1-14; 14.

in the cafeterias and beer-halls run by Mosselprom.²⁶³ In this essay, Brik describes the Blue Blouse's shift from the living newspaper form towards *Estrada*—a direction for which the Blue Blouse center was under some fire—as an attempt to produce entertainment that was both agitational and appropriate to the settings in which the group was performing.²⁶⁴ While these essays offered accounts of the blue blouse movement that were, at times, conflicting, each of them enlisted the history of the Blue Blouse movement in the polemics surrounding it. The considerable space occupied by these essays offered *Blue Blouse* a method of controlling the interpretation of its own history, justifying its course by grounding it in the romanticism of a search for new forms, suitable to revolutionary culture, as well as in the considerable authority of Meyerhold and Lenin.

The editors did not refuse to grant space within the magazine to those who disagreed with their positions, however. In their report on the Second All-Union Gathering of Blue Blouseniks, for example, they printed the platform of the “Perm' Opposition” in full. Hailing from the city of Perm', an industrial town in the Ural mountains, this faction argued in quite strong terms that *Blue Blouse*, in its shift toward *estrada* was departing from the correct position on living newspapers, and posed a fundamental threat to the health of proletarian theatre:

What are the differences between “Blue Blouse” and “Living Newspaper?”

Blue Blouse has no connection at any level with the Worker-peasant correspondent movement, although all kinds of Soviet newspapers are built on it above all. *Blue Blouse* strongly leans to the side of theatricalization, specifically

²⁶³ Brik, Osip. “Siniaia Bluza i mosselprom,” *Siniaia bluza* 76 (1928), 53-55. This is a shorter version of Brik's book, *Estrada pered stolikami*. Moskva: Teakinopechat, 1927.

²⁶⁴ As Brik notes, the entertainment never actually became light enough for the managers of the beer-halls and the Blue Blouse was eventually pushed out of that market. Brik, “Siniaia Bluza” 55.

vulgarized-revolutionary *estrada* and newspaper elements are effaced to the maximum.

In what way is *Blue Blouse* bad? *Blue Blouse* is not the leader of the living newspapers of the USSR, but merely a circumstantial model, on which living newspapers, having no other option, base themselves, with the result that at the local level the understanding of the difference between *Blue Blouse* and Living Newspaper has been erased. Nor is *Blue Blouse* the headquarters for the methodology of living newspaper work. *Blue Blouse*, in all the time of its existence has failed to come up with a precise designation for itself. In Moscow it advertises itself as a theatre, but is *estrada*, while in the provinces it advertises itself as a living newspaper, but is something along the lines of a dramatic circle with singing and music. *Blue Blouse*, often trying to be proletarian in its composition, has fallen into cynicism, or in the best case, equivocates and associates with cynicism.

Conclusion: historically, *Blue Blouse* has played its role. At the present time Living Newspapers should be purged of all extraneous elements darkening the essential composition of its work.²⁶⁵

Later that year the Perm' opposition launched its own monthly magazine, *Living Theatrical Newspaper* (often abbreviated as *Zh.T.G.*).²⁶⁶ *Zh.T.G.*'s frequent criticism of *Blue Blouse*'s leadership of the living newspaper eventually provoked a sharp response from Iuzhanin in 1928. In his critique of the quality of their work (he suggests, pointedly, that it varies greatly in the

²⁶⁵ "Osnovnye polozheniia 'Perm'skoi oppozitsii,'" *Siniaia bluza* 44 (1926), 63-64.

²⁶⁶ *Zh.T.G.* (*Zhivaia Teatral'naia Gazeta*) was published from September 1926 until 1929 by the Perm' Regional Union of Trade Unions and the Perm' Regional Office of Political Enlightenment. In 1929 the Publication moved to Sverdlovsk (now Ekaterinburg), where it continued to appear until 1931. Vishnevskii 56.

level of its literacy), he reversed their accusation of infidelity, insisting that their work was outdated: “They don’t understand dialectics. They don’t want to move onwards and upwards.”²⁶⁷ Arguing that their hostility to the devices of *Blue Blouse* has placed the Perm’ opposition at the tail of the living newspaper movement rather than at its head, Iuzhanin ends with the rebuke, “Weak, Comrades from Perm’!” and orders them to “Sit!”²⁶⁸

Zh.T.G. was not the only publication, with which *Blue Blouse* had to share the discursive space of the Living Newspaper movement. The mid 1920s saw a flurry of publications across the Soviet Union dedicated to the production of living newspapers, including *Voice of the Worker* (Rostov na Donu, 1925-27), *Work Bench* (Leningrad, 1926), *Living Newspaper* (Minsk, 1926), *Soviet Salesworker* (Moscow, 1926-27), *Pioneer’s Zh.T.G.* (Perm’ 1927-32), *Red Shirt* (Moscow, 1928-1932), and *Red Army Estrada* (Moscow 1928-31).²⁶⁹ While most of these publications were short lived or produced relatively few issues, their significance to local living newspaper groups should not be underestimated, as the repertoires of these local groups were frequently derived from multiple sources.²⁷⁰

The challenge that these other publications presented to *Blue Blouse*’s control of the discursive space did not prove to be as decisive, however, as that posed by *Club Stage*, the main theatrical publication of the VTsSPS. At both conferences the state-wide authority of *Blue Blouse* was called into question on the grounds that it was only supported by a Moscow regional organization. Point three of the “Resolution on the Speech ‘On the Blue Blouse Front’” called for *Blue Blouse* to “address the Cultural Section of the VTsSPS with a request for ideological

²⁶⁷ Iuzhanin, Boris. “Zh.T.G.,” *Siniaia bluza* 52 (1927), 3-4: 3.

²⁶⁸ Iuzhanin, Boris. “Zh.T.G.,” *Siniaia bluza* 52 (1927), 3-4: 4.

²⁶⁹ See the entries on *Zhivaia gazeta: golos rabochego*, *Zhivaia gazeta: Stanok*, *Zhivaia gazeta*, *Zhivaia gazeta: sovtorgsluzhashchii*, *pionerskaia Zh.T.G.*, *Krasnaia Rubakha*, and *Krasnoarmeiskaia estrada* in Vishnevskii.

²⁷⁰ See the tabulation of the results of Nikolai L’vov’s survey of living newspaper groups, which showed that many of the groups surveyed used some combination of *Blue Blouse*, *Small Forms of Club Spectacle*, *Zh.T.G.* and other periodicals as sources for their material. GTsTM f. 150 op.1 d.47 dok. 6, ll. 1-3.

guidance for the Moscow editorial board of *Blue Blouse* and the future of the movement. Without participation of the VTsSPS the future development of the living newspaper movement will certainly be anarchy.”²⁷¹ A similar resolution, passed at the Second All-Union Gathering of Blue Blouseniks the following year, underscores the failure of the Moscow Blue Blouse center to associate itself adequately with the statewide trade union organization and the questions that were raised about the legitimation of their authority.²⁷² When, in 1927, the Blue Blouse managed to gain the ideological guidance of the VTsSPS, the statewide organization quickly decided to incorporate *Blue Blouse* into their own magazine *Club Stage*, a move that the editorial board managed to resist for more than a year before the magazine was closed down.²⁷³

The struggle between the editors of *Blue Blouse*, supported by the MGSPS, and those of *Club Stage*, supported by the VTsSPS, can be seen as a struggle for control over the discursive space of the Do-It-Yourself theatre movement within the Soviet Union. The pages of their magazines offered radically different uses of that space, resulting from radically different visions of how the material space of the movement should be used. While *Blue Blouse*, despite the accusations of some critics like the members of the Perm' opposition, remained firmly devoted to the aesthetics of variety theatre and the avant-garde, *Club Stage* was oriented towards the presentation of full length plays performed in a realistic style. The first script published in *Club Stage*, “The Seventeenth Year,” was typical of its aesthetic. A three-act revolutionary melodrama, the play’s stage directions read like a pastiche of the Moscow Art Theatre’s style:

²⁷¹ “Reziliutsiia po dokladu ‘Na sinebluznom fronte’,” *Siniaia bluza* 23-24 (1925), 90.

²⁷² See theses 1 and 4 of Rezoliutsiia, priniataia 2-m Vsesoiuznym soveshaniem sinebluznikov 11/X 1926 goda,” *Siniaia bluza* 44 (1926), 62.

²⁷³ For the first announcement that *Blue blouse* would be incorporated into *Club Stage* see “Tovarishchi-sinebluzniki-zhivogazetchiki!” *Siniaia bluza* 55-56 (1927), 1.

“pause.... long pause.... wringing hands... long pause.... pause.... curtain.”²⁷⁴ Similarly the avant-garde costumes and instructions for creating noise orchestras printed in *Blue Blouse* were replaced by articles on creating realistic sound effects or the layout of box-sets (Figure 28) Iosif Isaev, the chief editor of *Club Stage* insisted that this reorientation was needed to achieve the artistic quality demanded by a working class whose “general cultural level” had grown.²⁷⁵

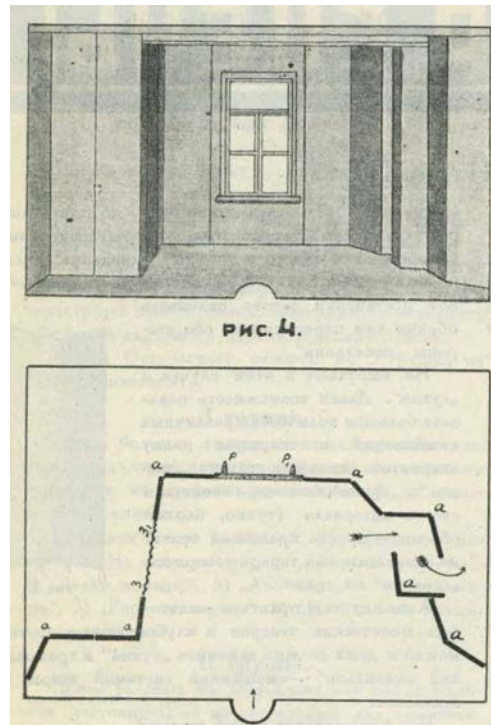


Figure 28. Illustration for an article on constructing boxed sets from Club Stage. “Tekhnika stseny,” *Klubnaia stsena* 1 (1927): 76.

The merger was initially greeted with optimism:

Blue Blouse walks off into history as a bright development of genuine Soviet revolutionary scenic art. The 56 issues of *Blue Blouse* have for THREE YEARS connected the blue blouseniks of the center with the periphery. We won’t loose these connections, but strengthen them. *Blue Blouse* steps under the wing of the

²⁷⁴ Gromov, A.M. “Semnadsatyi god,” *Klubnaia stsena* 1 (1927), 27- 39.

²⁷⁵ I. Isaev, “Osnovnie voprosy i perspektivy razvitie klubnoi stseny,” *Klubnaia Stsena* 1 (1927), 5-7; 5.

general trade union culture. Enormous things are in store for variety theatre in the clubs. Summing up, blue blouseniks, the 56th issue—WE’LL SEE YOU SOON IN *CLUB STAGE*.²⁷⁶

This optimism that the discursive space of Do-It-Yourself theatre could be shared was short lived, however. In his speech to the 1927 Gathering of Blue Blouseniks, Iuzhanin discusses the “disdainful” behavior of the supporters of long forms at the meetings of the editorial board of *Club Stage*, which led him to argue for the disentanglement of the two journals, noting that “attacks from the reaction with their *Rusalkas* and cumbersome plays are coming on all fronts.”²⁷⁷ The reprieve from the merger was short lived, and Iuzhanin’s effort to save *Blue Blouse* ultimately had little effect. Despite the fact that a section for the Blue Blouse movement was never opened in *Club Stage*, *Blue Blouse* was closed in June 1928, and on the final page of the magazine was a notice from the VTsSPS’s publishing house to the magazine’s subscribers informing them that their subscriptions would automatically be transferred to the magazine *Club Stage*.²⁷⁸

3.4 PRODUCTION OF SPACE: THE BLUE BLOUSE ALBUM

While the magazine was instrumental in organizing the Blue Blouse movement across the physical space of the Soviet Union, *Blue Blouse* also created within its pages a discursive version of the movement. The space of the magazine is filled with articles and images presenting the

²⁷⁶ Iuzhanin, Boris and Viktor Mrozovskii. “Tovarishchi-sinebluzniki-zhivogazetchiki!” *Siniaia bluza* 55-56 (1927)

1.

²⁷⁷ Iuzhanin, Boris. “Kak zhe byt’ dal’she?” *Siniaia bluza* 69-70 (1927), 46-49; 46.

²⁷⁸ “K svedeniiu podpischikov i chitatelei zhurnala *Siniaia bluza*,” *Siniaia bluza* 78 (1928), 66.

movement as enormous and diverse, but also united in purpose and well organized through a central authority. While aspects of this discursive Blue Blouse have been touched on in the previous sections of this chapter, it appears in its most coherent form in *The Blue Blouse Album*, a double issue, number 71/72, published in January 1928 (Figure 29). *The Blue Blouse Album* was the most self-promotional, but also the most significant artifact of the Blue Blouse movement. The idea for an album originated in 1926, when the magazine printed an announcement addressed to “All Blue Blouseniks of the USSR”:

The Editors of *Blue Blouse* have undertaken to publish an album, in which will be included photographs of groups and moments from productions of the work of blue blouseniks of the USSR. All Blue Blouse and living newspaper groups in the territory of the Soviet Republic wishing to be included should send, no later than 1 May the following: 1) Shots of the group and moments from the work of blue blouseniks on stage (preferably parades and sketches); 2) Include a short history of the origins and work of the living newspaper (no longer than 50 lines).²⁷⁹

While it took nearly two years from the publication of this announcement to produce it, the Blue Blouse Album was larger, longer, and of a higher quality than any of their other publications, and was intended as a showpiece celebrating the movement to itself and to outsiders.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁹ “Vsem sinebluznikam SSSR,” *Siniaia bluza* 27-28 (1926), 95.

²⁸⁰ The title page, which was printed in Russian, German, French, and English underscores the promotional scope of the issue. *Siniaia bluza* 71-72 (1928), 2.



Figure 29. Cover of The Blue Blouse Album. *Siniaia bluza 71-72 (1928)*.

The Issue begins with a clear statement of the Blue Blouse’s geographic ambition: the slogan “From Ceylon to Abyssinia, Blouse Blue, from Kamchatka to Georgia, Blue Blouse” was printed in large type, set against images of the globe (Figure 30). In between the halves of the slogan The Blue Blouse is introduced in a short paragraph:

The Blue Blouse is a Soviet occurrence. Starting from the living newspaper in 1923, the Blue Blouse developed into an original spectacle synthesizing the variety show and theatrical art.... Itself born of the revolution, blue blouse has given birth to thousands and thousands of followers. Across the USSR in 1927, in workers clubs and red corners nearly 7,000 circles of Blue-Blouseniks can be counted. The fame of the Blue Blouse has spread far from the boundaries of the USSR. In every European country there exist workers’ troupes, following the example of the Moscow Blue Blouse.²⁸¹

²⁸¹ *Siniaia bluza 71-72 (1928)*: 3.

Three main points that organize the imagined space of the movement throughout the issue are crystallized in this short statement. It firmly grounds Moscow as the center of the Blue Blouse movement. It establishes the specifically Soviet nature of the movement while maintaining that the movement's spread across the world is natural (and perhaps inevitable). It also emphasizes quite strongly that the movement covers the entire space of the Soviet Union.



Figure 30. “From Kamchatka to Georgia, Blue Blouses,” *Siniaia bluza* 71-72 (1928), 3.

This introduction is followed by three long photo-essays, which are the heart of the issue. The first is an 8 page series of individual portraits of the major figures in the Moscow Blue Blouse organization, divided under the headings, “Staff of the Blue Blouse,” “Our Authors,” “Our Directors,” and so on (Figure 31). This is followed by 29 pages featuring photos of the Moscow Blue Blouse troupes in performance. The third photo essay, “Blue Blouse: All-Union and World Wide,” consists of 49 pages of photographs of Blue Blouse troupes from across the Soviet Union arranged three to five on a page.²⁸² The ordering of these photo essays clearly lays out the relationship between the professional Moscow center and the amateur collectives in the periphery. Beginning with a portrait of Boris Iuzhanin, the founder of the Blue Blouse and editor of the magazine, we move through the traditional theatrical hierarchy—writer, director, composer, actor, all of whom are named and featured individually, before moving on to group photos from the non-professional collectives. The presentation of this relationship celebrates

²⁸² *Siniaia bluza* 71-72(1928), 9-100.

both the centralism of the movement and its size, suggesting a coherence that, as the previous pages have shown, was not always there.



Figure 31. Our Authors (V. Mass, V. Tipot, V. Ardov, D. Dolev, G. Burevoi). *Siniaia bluza* 71-72 (1928), 8.

Selected from the entire run of the magazine, the second photo essay, featuring production stills of the work of the Moscow troupes, offers significant insight into what the editors of *Blue Blouse* considered the core of their repertoire. The productions pictured feature a range of concerns that, taken together could be considered an index of Soviet tropes. The photographs offer images of industrialization and mechanization in the “machine dance,” “Ford and Us” (Figure 32), and the physical cultural sketches staged by Tamara Tomiss.²⁸³ Broadly international concerns are demonstrated in images of capitalist cooperation with fascists in “Stock Exchange” and the ravages of imperialism in “Hands Off China.”²⁸⁴ Lenin and the Red Army were honored, the bourgeoisie was mocked, and the Moscow department store GUM was advertised. The photographs in this essay presented the Blue Blouse as the propagandists of a Soviet state that was industrialized, progressive, and urban.

²⁸³ *Siniaia bluza* 71-72 (1928), 29.

²⁸⁴ *Siniaia bluza* 71-72 (1928), 22, 33.

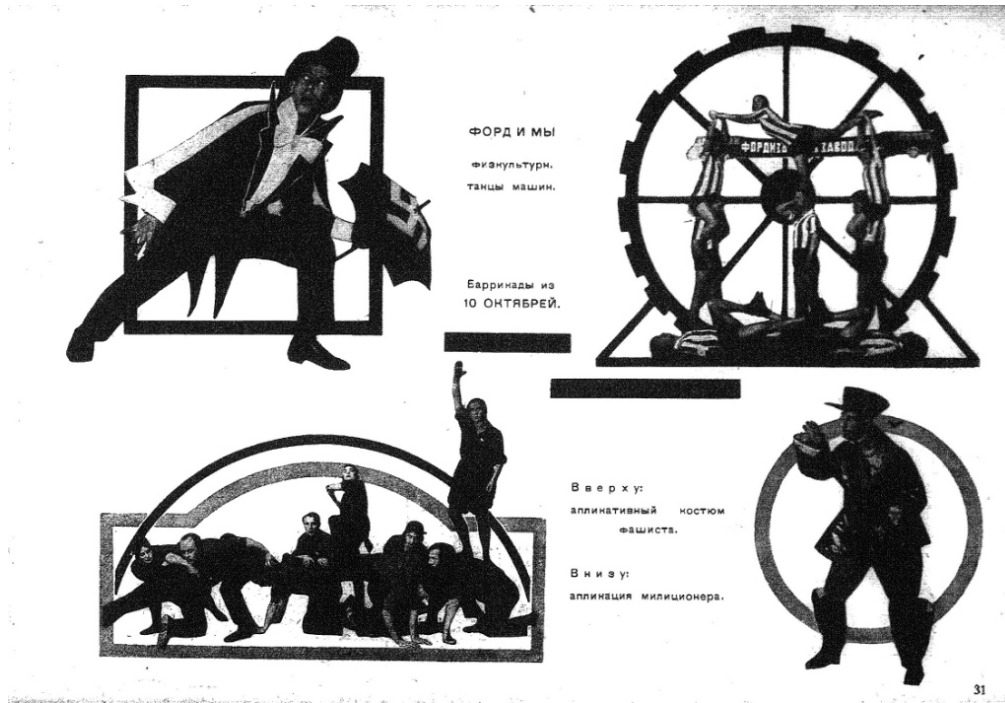


Figure 32. Page from the Blue Blouse Album. Clockwise: Costume for a fascist, “Ford and us,” Costume for a policeman, Barricades from “10 Octobers.” *Siniaia bluza* 71-72 (1928), 31.

The Third photo essay in its organization of photos of collectives from across the Soviet union offers a kind of discursive map of the Blue Blouse movement. While these photos are no different from those printed in the pages of other issues of the magazine, gathered together they create a much more powerful effect than when they appear a few at a time. Although there is some haphazardness to the selection (the group from Gzhatsk was featured three times for example) the photo-essay is an overpowering demonstration of the size and diversity of the blue blouse movement.²⁸⁵ These photos were not organized by region, but rather in such a way that as much geographic and ethnic diversity as possible was pictured. Kazan' share the page with Kozlov, the Belarussian city of Polotsk, and Pachelma station on the Riazan'- Ural rail line. (Figure 33). The success of the Blue Blouse movement at overcoming the challenges presented

²⁸⁵ The photos of the Gzhatsk collective are featured on pages 52, 74, and 82, *Siniaia bluza* 71-72 (1928).

by the size of the Soviet Union was pictured on every page. While the previous photo-essay offered a catalogue of images of shared Sovietness, difference is celebrated here. The captions announce the variety of locations of the troupes and often proudly mark their ethnicity as well. In line with the nationalities policy of the Soviet Union, ethnic Russian groups are left unmarked, existing quietly beside the Jewish Blue Blouse (Figure 33) or the group from the 1st Tatar club (Figure 34), both from Kazan'.²⁸⁶ The only way in which Russia takes any precedence on the pages is in the language in which they were written. While the photo essay celebrates the periphery, its constitution highlights the importance of the Moscow center. The images of the various collectives were submitted to the editorial board of *Blue Blouse* by the amateur collectives themselves, and returned to them in the form of the special issue, but the groups have no interaction with each other except through the metropole.



Figure 33. Page from the Blue Blouse Album featuring the Blue Blouses of Pachelma station and Polotsk, the Grey Blouse of Kozlov and the Jewish Blue Blouse of Kazan'. *Siniaia bluza* 71-72 (1928), 79.

²⁸⁶ Martin 19-20.

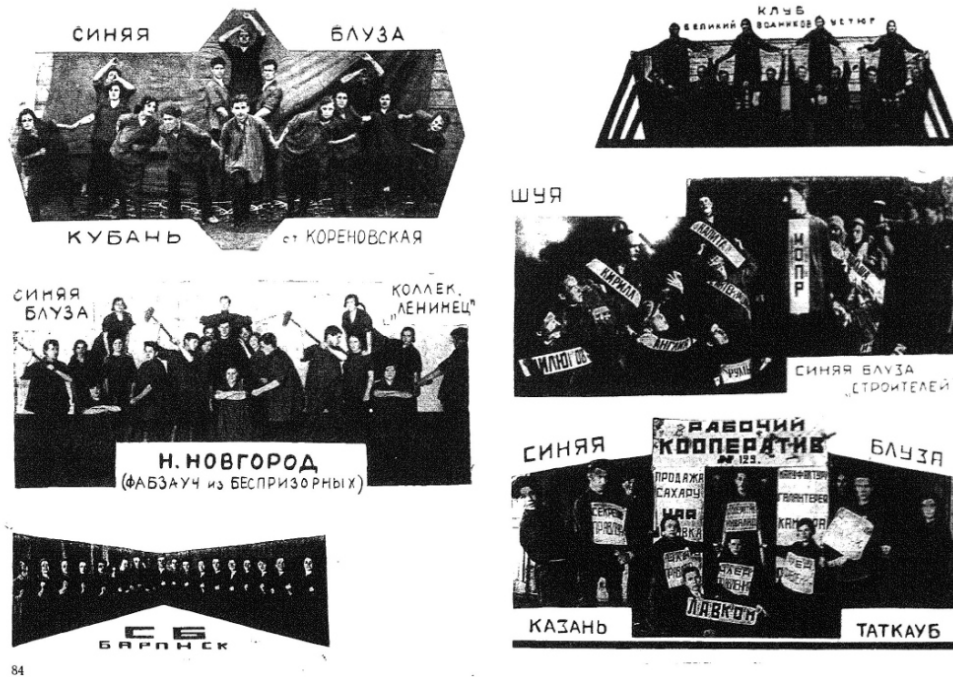


Figure 34. Page from the Blue Blouse Album featuring the Blue Blouses of Korenovskaia station (Kuban'), Velikii Ustiug, Nizhnyi Novgorod, Shuia, Barpnsk, and the 1st Tatar Club of Kazan'. *Siniiaia bluza* 71-72 (1928), 84.

The *Blue Blouse Album* highlighted and exaggerated key features of the Blue Blouse movement—its diversity, its size, its centralization. The discursive version of the movement that the issue produced corresponded only imperfectly to the movement as it existed in physical space: while the movement was diverse, its troupes were overwhelmingly concentrated on the western third of the Soviet Union, and the Russian portion of that third, at that; while the movement was massive, it was probably nowhere near the size advertised by the magazine; and while Moscow occupied an important place in the movement, the organizational center of the Blue Blouse was hardly capable of truly coordinating the movement. The discursive version of the Blue Blouse spanned the difference between the movement as it existed in the perceived space of empirically measurable reality and in the idealized conceived space of its planners and ideologists. While it is perhaps tempting to dismiss this construction as imaginary or false, the discursive version of the Blue Blouse movement generated by the magazine was probably as

important to the movement's members experience of their activity as the material practices of the movement in physical space—perhaps, even, more important. After all, the geographic realities of the Soviet Union all but ensured that the only contact a Polish Blue Blousenik in Minsk would have with an Uzbek Blue Blousenik in Tashkent would be through the magazine and the image of their community that it presented.

3.5 CONCLUSION

The rapid spread of the Blue Blouse movement across the material space of the Soviet Union was facilitated by the creation of a discursive space on the pages of their magazine. Not only did *Blue Blouse* allow the artists working in Moscow to distribute their scripts, designs, scores, and staging instructions to troupes all across the Soviet Union, it gave members of troupes working on the periphery the ability to contribute to the movement by sending in letters, photographs, and, occasionally scripts, all of which might appear on the pages of the magazine. The contents of *Blue Blouse* were carefully controlled by an editorial board led by Boris Iuzhanin, by the board, itself, was responsible to the trade-union organizations that supported it and ultimately to the blue blouseniks, themselves. This resulted in the transfer of the magazine to purview of the VTsSPS and, ultimately, to the closure of *Blue Blouse* as it was “merged” with the VTsSPS’s magazine *Club Stage*. While this blow did not mark the end of the Blue Blouse movement, the loss of the discursive space was crippling, as it severed the connection between the organizational center in Moscow and do-it-yourself troupes in the periphery, and subsequent attempts to repair that connection with the publication of new magazines, *Repertoire of the Blue Blouse* and *Small Forms of Club Spectacle*, were not successful. But, during its short run, *Blue*

Blouse played a vital role in helping the Blue Blouse movement to exist as a movement, producing a coherent image of the movement as a whole and representing it to itself in the images on the pages of the magazine, allowing isolated troupes to imagine themselves as part of something much larger—something that stretched “from Kamchatka to Georgia.”

4.0 SPACES OF REPRESENTATION: BLUE BLOUSE PERFORMANCE AND THE SOVIET GEOGRAPHIC IMAGINATION

We came to tell you, tell you, tell you,
What you all should learn, should learn, should learn. Yes!
From our newspaper, living newspaper, living newspaper,
Everything that happens under the sun,
You should learn about it all:
About the international situation,
And about the union movement,
About the new way of life,
And about malicious red tape,
About the Soviet Platform,
About currency reform,
About the red banknote,
About the affairs of the Air Force,
About fertilized soil,
About workers faculties and schools,
About France, and Germany,
About the Acknowledgement of the USSR,
About private speculation,
About Trusts and cooperatives,
About the business of Soviet Power, Red Power, Red Power....
And those who want to hear us, hear us, hear us,
Shouldn't close their ears, close their ears, yes.
But with bated breath, yes, yes, breath, yes, yes, breath,
Should watch everything with attention,
Everything from beginning to end.
The work day's done—but don't pick your nose!
While away your time with us.
As you drag yourself here,
drag your family with you,
and every member of the trade union—

Remember the living newspaper “Blue Blouse”.²⁸⁷
—“Entry March” from the first issue of *Blue Blouse*

As Chapters 2 and 3 argued, the Blue Blouse movement made its mark on the material space of the new Soviet state by generating theatre centers that radically altered the nature of access to theatrical performance and creating a discursive space in their magazine, in which their members could imagine themselves as a part of a larger force working to build the new state. But Blue Blouse performances also marked this material space in another way, by reflecting and producing the imagined space of the new state—creating what David Harvey, following Henri Lefebvre, called a “Space of Representation.” As Emma Widdis argues in her study of imaginative geography and Soviet film:

From the very first days after the revolution, the new state began an obsessive process of self-representation.... The task was to seek out and propagate appropriate images of the new world—to reclothe the old world in revolutionary garments, or to reshape it in revolutionary form.... The terms and images through which the territory was represented reveal how the new space was envisaged by the producers of culture and how it was presented to a wider audience as a context for everyday life.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ Мы пришли вам рассказать, рассказать, рассказать./ Что вы все должны узнать, должны узнать. Да!/ Из нашей газеты, живой газеты, живой газеты./ Все что творится в белом свете./ Должны узнать вы обо всем:/ О международном положении./ И о профдвижении./ О новом быте./ И о злой волоките./ О советской платформе./ О денежной реформе./ О Червонном банкноте./ О делах в Воздухфлоте./ Об Удобренном поле./ О рабфаках и школе./ О Франции, Германии./ Об СССР признании./ О частной спекуляции./ О трестах и кооперации./ Про дела советской власти, красной власти, красной власти..../ И кто хочет нас послушать, нас послушать, нас послушать./ Тот не должен вешать уши, Вешать уши. Да./ А затаив в зобу дыханье, да, да, дыханье, да, да, дыханье./ Да просмотреть все со вниманием./ Все от начала до конца./ Кончил труд--не ковырай в носу./ К нам иди коротать досуг./ Тащишь персону свою./ Тащи с собой и семью./ Каждый член профсоюза./ Помни о живой газете «Синяя Блуза». “Antre.” *Siniiaia bluza* 1 (1924), 9-10.

²⁸⁸ Widdis, *Visions* 3.

The Blue Blouse movement actively participated in this process of self-representation. On stage, through the production of hundreds of sketches, monologues, and songs, Blue Blouse performers created durable images of the Soviet Union (or at least of the Soviet Union that some of its citizens imagined it could be), of the world in which it existed (or in which they feared it existed), and of the new world produced by the revolution.

This chapter will explore the imagined space of the Soviet Union that was presented by Blue Blouse troupes on the stages of workers' clubs and beerhalls by examining a handful of texts that are representative of the general concerns of the movement, but which also show the variety of material produced during a Blue Blouse show. Blue Blouse performances would begin with an entry march—like the one that opens this chapter—followed by an hour of sketches, songs, acrobatic numbers, and monologues, and would close with a final march reminding viewers of what they had seen. The Space of Representation generated by the Blue Blouse movement was a collective space: Blue Blouse works were produced and reproduced by do-it-yourself performers, radically narrowing the distance between those creating these representations and those consuming them. As a result, the performances described in this chapter are best seen as ideal forms that were adapted, updated, and departed from as they were reproduced by actual Blue Blouse troupes all around the Soviet Union.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁹ Details about the personnel involved in productions by professional Moscow troupes are provided when they are available. One result of the collective ethos of the Blue Blouse is that they frequently neglected to mention things like who directed what sketch or who played which character, as these details were unnecessary for troupes trying to reproduce their work.

4.1 USE OF SPACE: POLITICS, WORK, AND EVERYDAY LIFE

As Vladimir Paperny has argued, space in the early Soviet Union was imagined as fundamentally collective: “[i]f the individual somehow did become the object of attention, he or she had only two choices: either understand the direction of the collective’s movement and join it, or misunderstand it and risk being crushed by the masses.”²⁹⁰ In theatres and clubs the Blue Blouse staged this collectivity on a nightly basis, marching and singing in unison or uniting their bodies to build pyramids. Many of the sketches that they performed also illustrated the fact that the space of the Soviet Union was meant for the use of the collective rather than individuals. This section will examine pieces that imagine this collectivity through a combination of political education and public mourning, through the incarnation of collective responsibility at work, and through an illustration of the role of the collective in everyday life.

4.1.1 Political Education: “Memorial of Lenin”

One of the pieces performed in the first Blue Blouse productions was an “oratory,” “Memorial of Lenin,” that functioned both as a history lesson and an elegy. The staging of the work was simple and solemn—photographs show participants standing in a line holding placards with important dates written on them—but a degree of dynamism was created by the overlapping voices of performers (Figure 35). The piece was written to be performed by between seven and twenty speakers and was structured in such a way that the participants frequently finish each

²⁹⁰ Paperny 105.

other's sentences or join in and speak in unison, emphasizing the collective nature of both their celebration of Lenin's achievements and their mourning of his passing.



Figure 35. “Memorial of Lenin.” The sign reads “Bulletin: Lenin Died January 21, 1924 at 18:50. *Siniaia bluza* 71/72 (1927), 21.

“Memorial of Lenin” begins with a brief rehearsal of Lenin’s role in revolutionary history, during which performers hold up a placard with a date on it and remind the spectators of the events that occurred on that date. Through this narration Lenin and the revolution are merged. This history begins before Lenin’s involvement in revolutionary politics with the date 1848 and the words “A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of Communism. Proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains.”²⁹¹ History then moves forward 50 years to 1898 and the formation of the Russian Social Democratic Workers’ Party, skipping the year of Lenin’s birth, thus suggesting that just as Lenin will continue to live after his death, he was truly born with the publication of *The Communist Manifesto*. The history lesson continues through the 1905

²⁹¹ “Pamiati Lenina.” *Siniaia bluza* 1 (1924), 11-23; 12.

Revolution, February 1917, and October 1917. In celebration of the six years he guided the Soviet Union, following the revolution, Lenin is hailed as the “great machinist... skillful conductor of the steam-engine of the international proletarian revolution from tsarist exploitation to the coming commune.”²⁹²

But then a hush falls across the performers. Raising a placket with the date April 12, 1924 they slowly begin speaking again:

1st participant: Across our ranks it passed like a lash:

2nd participant: “Lenin died.”

ALL: It was somehow unbelievable.

3rd participant: Can Illich²⁹³ really die,

ALL: If he lives in our hearts.

4th participant: The taciturn radio’s cry

Carried to the cities and the settlements:

5th participant: Dead is our leader, Vladimir Lenin,

Dead is the great old man....

3rd participant: Everywhere is grief, global, great,

4th participant: Everywhere are tears watering the fields,

5th participant: But we burn with one fiery idea:

ALL: Lenin lives.

6th participant: Lenin lives,

ALL: Lenin lives.²⁹⁴

²⁹² “Pamiati Lenina” 13.

²⁹³ Lenin’s patronymic.

²⁹⁴ “Pamiati Lenina” 17.

A speaker then declaims a speech about Lenin and his ideas, ending with the promise: “Where Leninist work is not forgotten,/ There will live a million-headed Lenin.”²⁹⁵ Lenin is imagined as merging into the collective and gaining immortality as a tool of the proletariat:

2nd participant: Lenin—

ALL: Our Banner,

3rd participant: Lenin—

ALL: Our slogan,

4th participant: Lenin—our school.²⁹⁶

The sketch ends with the declaration that “Lenin will always be with us” and the playing of “The Internationale,” which in revolutionary performance usually enacted the merging of performers onstage with spectators in the auditorium into a single collective as they joined together to sing the anthem.

4.1.2 The Politics of Labor: “The Tournament of Production”

In the Soviet Union, collective responsibility extended beyond political action into the workplace and home, and much of the repertoire of the Blue Blouse was concerned with precisely these kinds of everyday politics. In 1925 *Blue Blouse* published “The Tournament of Production,” a sketch that made the struggle against bad behavior in the workplace quite literal by staging it as a series of boxing matches.²⁹⁷ These “boxing matches” were a popular genre of Blue Blouse skit and were used to illustrate everything from monetary policy to international politics (Figure 36).

²⁹⁵ “Pamiati Lenina” 19.

²⁹⁶ “Pamiati Lenina” 23.

²⁹⁷ “Proizvodstvennyi chempionat.” *Siniaia bluza* 6 (1925), 28-34.

“The Tournament of Production” was a musical number, but there was no special music composed for it: instead, characters sang to the tune of well known songs including popular songs, folk songs, and a military march.

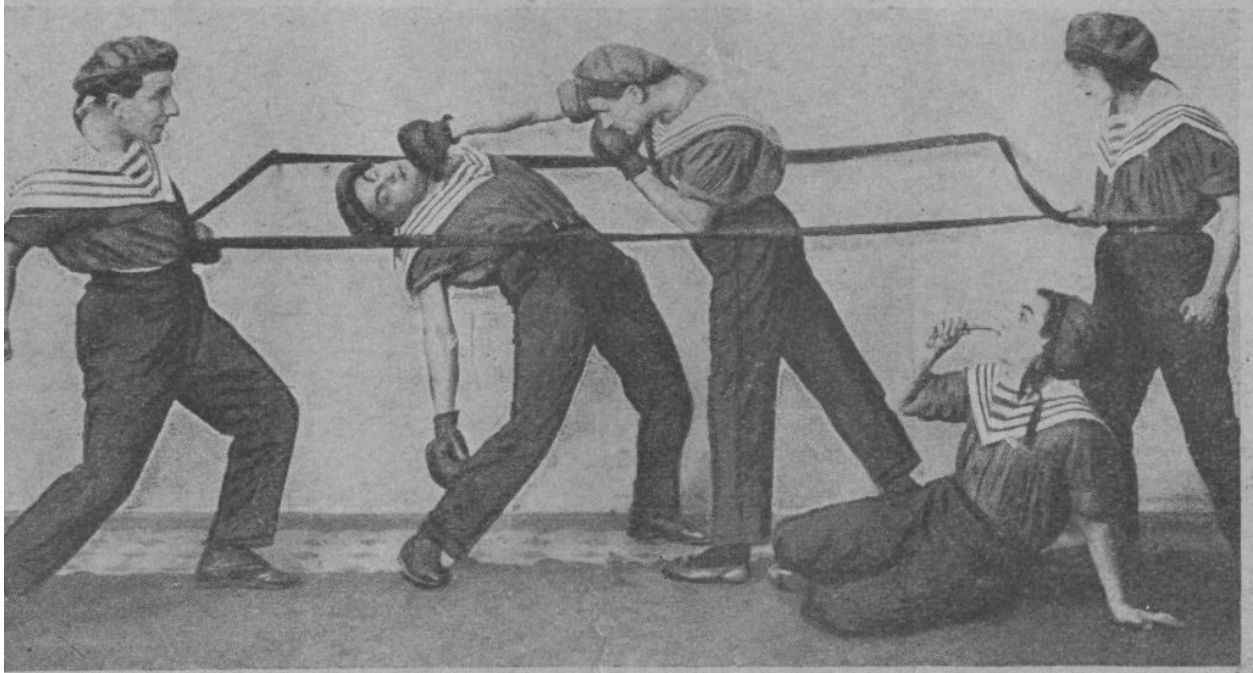


Figure 36. Comic boxing match directed by Tamara Tomiss. *Siniaia bluza* 71/72 (1927), 35.

The piece begins with a referee announcing: “It is my honor to present to the notable public of the proletarian Soviet republic our tournament of production!” This is followed by a parade of champions, in which performers march onstage wearing ribbons announcing the industrial sin that they embody: Laziness, Lost time, Shoddy work, and Negligence. They sing:

We are champions of a bad sort,
We don't understand the struggle a bit.
We are lazybones, lazybones,
Good-for-nothings, good-for-nothings,

Champions of worthlessness.²⁹⁸

One by one they are then introduced by the referee, and each sings a series of comic couplets illustrating their sin. Laziness, for example, sings:

Oh once I went, twice I went on a bender,

O three times I went, but can I have my paycheck?

All around they work according to NOT [the scientific organization of labor],

But all I do according to NOT is drink.

When it's time to work I wave goodbye.

I skip three days and then rest for three more.²⁹⁹

After each of the champions has been introduced, the referee is about to announce who will be the contestants in the first match when suddenly a new contender wearing a red mask appears in the back of the auditorium singing to the tune of "The Toreador Song" from *Carmen*:

I'm a champion, I'm warning you.

I'm a champion, I'm a champion.

I call all comers to the ring,

In no time I'll pound you into macaroni.³⁰⁰

One by one the other combatants step into the ring with the man in the red mask and they box. During each fight the referee is expected to adlib commentary on the match and on specific occurrences of the sins in the factory where the performance is taking place, indicating workers who are lazy or citing statistics regarding poorly made products. After the champion in the red

²⁹⁸ "Proizvodstvennyi chempionat" 29.

²⁹⁹ "Proizvodstvennyi chempionat" 30.

³⁰⁰ "Proizvodstvennyi chempionat" 32.

mask wins the final fight, the referee names him the victor of the tournament and asks him to remove his mask. He does so and sings to the audience:

I'm a class-conscious worker,
Eager to support industrialization.
From the ranks of red workers,
The might of the Soviet state will be built.
I've dealt with these dangerous foes,
With overwhelming anger....
For the happiness of the whole red land,
Laziness, Lost time, Shoddy work, and Negligence,
Should be swept away.³⁰¹

As this finale makes clear, the victory of the conscious worker is really a victory for the collective: in the Soviet Union, production becomes a collective responsibility and poor performance hurts not merely a boss, but “the whole red land.”

4.1.3 The Politics of Private Life: “Marusia Poisoned Herself.”

The Blue Blouse also staged works examining the place of the private sphere within the collective space of the Soviet Union and the ways in which family life and romantic attachments had been altered (or not) by the revolution. One such sketch is Vladimir Mass's “Marusia Poisoned Herself,” which was staged by the Blue Blouse's Estrada-Vaudeville Troupe under the direction of Emil' Mei in 1928. The title is taken from a cycle of popular pre-revolutionary

³⁰¹ “Proizvodstvennyi chempionat” 34.

songs, the so-called “cruel romances.” In these songs, a girl, Marusia, poisons herself after being spurned by the man she loves. While the precise lyrics change from version to version, most include a moment when, lying in the hospital, she tells the doctor: “Save me, or don’t save me. My life has no value.” She is not saved, and her lover realizes his mistake too late. The Blue Blouse’s version begins with a similar situation: a young Komsomol member named Pavel Dirkin (played by Vsevolod Reztsov in the Moscow version) is dumping his wife, Marusia (also a Komsomol member), because he is moving up in the ranks of the party and feels that he needs someone more suitable to his new station. She pleads with him to stay:

Have you forgotten how we dreamed together,
Suffered,
Shared our labors and our losses,
Through the cold,
Through hunger,...
How together we carried our work to the front,
Loved each other,
Desired each other,
And had one common goal together?³⁰²

He assures her that he has not forgotten, but explains to her that while this may have been the way things were under war communism, things have now changed, new conditions have been created. Invoking the collective good as a justification for his personal desires, he assures her that his decision is not motivated by personal feelings, but by concern for public welfare—he

³⁰² Mass, Vladimir. “Marusia otravilas'.” *Siniia bluza* 74 (1928), 4-11; 4. Following his time with the Blue Blouse, Reztsov went on to a long career in the *estrada* duet, Mirzoiants and Reztsov. Sheremet'evskaia, N. E. “Mirzoiants i Restzov.” Uvarova, Elizaveta, ed. *Estrada v Rossii XX veka: Entsiklopedia*. Moskva: Olma-press, 2004. 393-394.

owes it to the new society to breed with a beautiful, well-dressed, university-educated woman. Dirkin understands, he says, that she will be unable to live without him, so he gives Marusia some money to buy poison, gently informing her that he won't need a receipt. As Dirkin pushes Marusia offstage towards the pharmacy, his new infatuation wanders onstage. This new lover, Ninet, a stylishly dressed "NEP-woman"³⁰³ agrees to marry Dirkin when she hears that he will shortly become single. The costumes, designed by Nina Aizenberg, sharply contrast the simplicity of Marusia's outfit with the over-the-top modernity of Ninet's high-collared dress (Figure 37).



Figure 37. "Marusia Poisoned Herself." From left to right: the Important Person, the Elegant Lady, Dirkin, Marusia, Ninet. *Siniaia bluza* 74 (1928), 5.

³⁰³ Nep-men and -women was the derisive term given to those who profited from the limited private commerce that was allowed during the period of the NEP (New Economic Policy—1921-1928) and were a frequent target of the Blue Blouse's satire. See, Ball, Alan M. *Russia's Last Capitalists: The Nepmen, 1921-1929*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1987.

No sooner is Ninet offstage, than Dirkin notices an even better match for himself—an elegant lady dressed in gold. Dirkin quickly asks her to marry him, and she asks for a moment to consider her answer. Dirkin quickly finds Ninet and apologizes that she is no longer sufficiently cultured for him:

You see, for me, you've become worn out.

I thought I found something in you, but you're not it.

For me, you are too simple.

What can you offer me with your lack of culture and dingy sweetness?

Therefore, I suggest you take a hike!

When she begins to cry he offers to buy her poison as well:

Here is for a bottle of poison—

No receipt is necessary....

I have no hard feelings toward you, you are a human,

And I'm sad that you must die so early.

Nevertheless, hurry off to the pharmacy,

Right now my new passion is on her way.³⁰⁴

Ninet leaves and the elegant lady returns, this time with her husband, “a very important person,” who proceeds to beat Dirkin for his insolence in proposing to his wife. After a few minutes of slapstick violence, Dirkin sits alone on the stage, wishing he hadn't sent Marusia to poison herself, when she reappears. He expresses surprise and delight that she is alive, and she explains that modern women do not need to poison themselves over idiots like him: “You think

³⁰⁴ Mass, “Marusia” 9.

I'd be worse off without you?"³⁰⁵ She then explains that she played a trick on him to win him back: she enlisted friends from her do-it-yourself theatre group to dress up in costumes, seduce him, and then beat him. "The only shame," she says, "is that they beat you so little."³⁰⁶ Dirkin insists that he has learned his lesson and Marusia agrees to take him back.

The meta-theatrical gesture of using do-it-yourself performers to put an end to Dirkin's poor behavior highlights the role of the Blue Blouse movement as a corrective force in the Soviet Union. But it also shows that the family unit is a collective concern in this new space as well. As Paperny argues, "the architecture of the 1920s.... reduce[d] the family to the level of cohabitants.... Furthermore, this cohabitation was considered only a temporary deviation from the collective existence."³⁰⁷ While the Blue Blouse's image of the family is perhaps less radical than the one that informed the collective layout of constructivist housing projects, it does deemphasize the importance of the family unit.³⁰⁸ Unlike the Marusia of the pre-revolutionary song, Soviet Marusias can rely on the collective to restore their relationships or, failing that, replace them.

4.2 ACCESS AND DISTANCIATION: STAGING THE MARGINS

The Soviet state was heavily concerned with the equalization of access, creating a horizontal uniformity that would "turn every center into a periphery and every periphery into a center."

This equalization was to extend both to space and to people. Blue Blouse troupes joined in what

³⁰⁵ Mass, "Marusia" 10.

³⁰⁶ Mass, "Marusia" 11.

³⁰⁷ Paperny 107.

³⁰⁸ On collective housing and the family, see Papery 106-108.

Paperny terms “a struggle against a *hierarchy of space* and a struggle against a *hierarchy of people*” as well. This section will examine Blue Blouse performances that imagined this struggle through the erasure of the distinction between country and city, the building of infrastructure, and the strengthening of women’s rights within the family.

4.2.1 Songs of Modernization and Equalization: *Chastushki* on the Country and the City

The *smychka* (union) of workers and peasants was one of the most important projects of the Soviet 1920s. As Widdis notes, “[s]*mychka* was slogan as well as policy, metaphor as much as reality: villager and worker were to be united as Soviet citizens; centre and periphery were to be reconfigured as *equal spaces* in a nonhierarchical society.”³⁰⁹ This equalization required both the development of the countryside and a reimagining of the relationship between the country and the city. One of the most common ways in which the Blue Blouse movement propagandized the development of the countryside was through *chastushki*, a form of comic folk song structured around pairs of rhyming couplets. *Chastushki* were among the most popular elements of Blue Blouse performances because they were easy to stage, could feature dancing (or not), and could be accompanied by the piano, an accordion, or nothing at all (Figure 38).

³⁰⁹ Widdis, *Visions* 21.



Figure 38. *Chastushki*. *Siniaia bluza* 71/72 (1927), 23.

Chastushki written on rural themes often stressed the industrialization of agricultural production and the modernization of village life, imagining a leveling of the cultural and economic divide between urban and rural areas. In “Agronomic *Chastushki*” written by V. Maslov in 1926, for example, the singers celebrate the use of chemical insecticide, the abandonment of the traditional “three field” system, and the power of tractors:

I will tell a little secret,
To our whole village:
We were asked to sing *chastushki*,
On red agronomy....
In the water wades a duck,
And in the water swims a dogfish.
It’s no joke that against pests,

We can be helped by *aviakhim* (airborne pesticides).....³¹⁰

From the three-field system Ivan,

Always has empty pockets.

I, on the other hand,

Rotate my crops fully....

Horses munch on grass and hay,

Tractors lap up gasoline.

Where there's a tractor there's no doubt,

That farming is well under way.³¹¹

Just as agriculture was to be transformed by science and technology, the peasants were to be transformed by culture, and, especially, literacy. The major centers of Soviet village culture and politics were reading rooms (*izby chital'nia*), the rural equivalent of workers' clubs. As Peter Kenez argues: "Of the two, the reading rooms were far more important: in the 1920's the party had not yet fully penetrated the countryside and it used the reading rooms as outposts in a more or less alien, if not hostile, territory."³¹² Maslov's "*Chastushki* on the Reading Room" celebrate the transformational potential of these new locations:

The starling has a nest,

³¹⁰ Often much of the humor of *chastushki* comes from the unlikely pairings of rhyming words or the cleverness with which the rhymes are completed by the final word. As a result, however, the humor often doesn't come across in translation. In the preceding pair of couplets, for example, the joke relies on the punctuation provided by the word *aviakhim* (airborne pesticides) on several levels: not only is it an unusual rhyme for the word dogfish (*nalim*), it is also an unlikely subject for a song, so there is surprise when, with the final word of the couplets, we find out that that is what they were about.

³¹¹ Maslov, V. "Agronomicheskije Chastushki." *Siniaia bluza* 42 (1926), 47-48.

³¹² Kenez, Peter. *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, 135. Kenez focuses on the reading room as a site of indoctrination, but it was also central to campaigns for adult literacy, and the place where village activity circles (including, potentially, Blue Blouse troupes) operated. These activities, in Kenez's view, were just another method of indoctrination, but as I have tried to show throughout this dissertation, Blue Blouse troupes (and by extension other kinds of circles) are not *merely* a form of political indoctrination, but serve other purposes as well (even if these were not intended by the party).

The dog has a house,
And right here behind this door,
I have a reading room....
I'm in the reading room behind a newspaper—
The happiness is true,
For a conversation, this place,
Would be quite appropriate....
Vanka looks like a hero to us,
An energetic person.
In the reading room he has organized us,
Into a variety of circles....
It's very clear why,
Everyone flows into the reading room:
The enlightenment of the mind
Is completely on display there.³¹³

The Blue Blouse *chastushki*'s vision of the erasure of the difference between urban and rural spaces through the modernization of the countryside was not limited to the contents of the lyrics. In costumes designed for the performance of *chastushki* by the Moscow Blue Blouse troupes, Aizenberg created a modernist version of traditional peasant attire that emphasized asymmetry and the abstract play of shapes (Figure 39). This fusion of rural costume with modernist design visually transforms “backwards” peasants into participants in the avant-garde.

³¹³ Maslov, V. “Chastushki ob izbe-chital'ne.” *Siniiaia bluza* 42 (1926), 43-44.

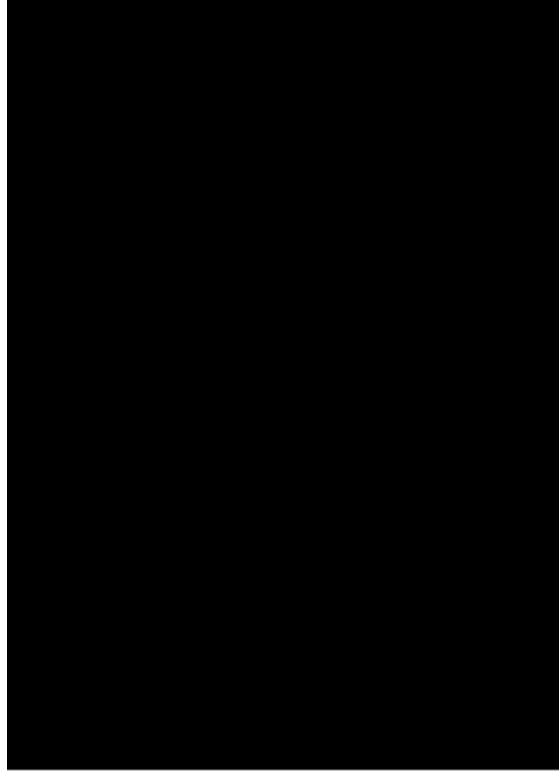


Figure 39. Nina Aizenberg. Costumes for *Chastushki. Siniia bluza* 45 (1926), 55.

In addition to celebrating the modernization of rural life, *chastuski* were also used to bring images of urban vitality to the countryside, allowing peasants vicariously to participate in imagining the utopian Soviet city. Futurist poet Valdimir Mayakovsky, for example, wrote “*Chastushki on the Metro*” in 1926. The subway depicted in his verses was entirely a figment of the utopian imagination—at that time the Metro was no more a reality in Moscow than in any village—a point underscored by Aizenberg’s costumes for the number, which make the singers look a little like bus drivers from outer space (Figure 40).

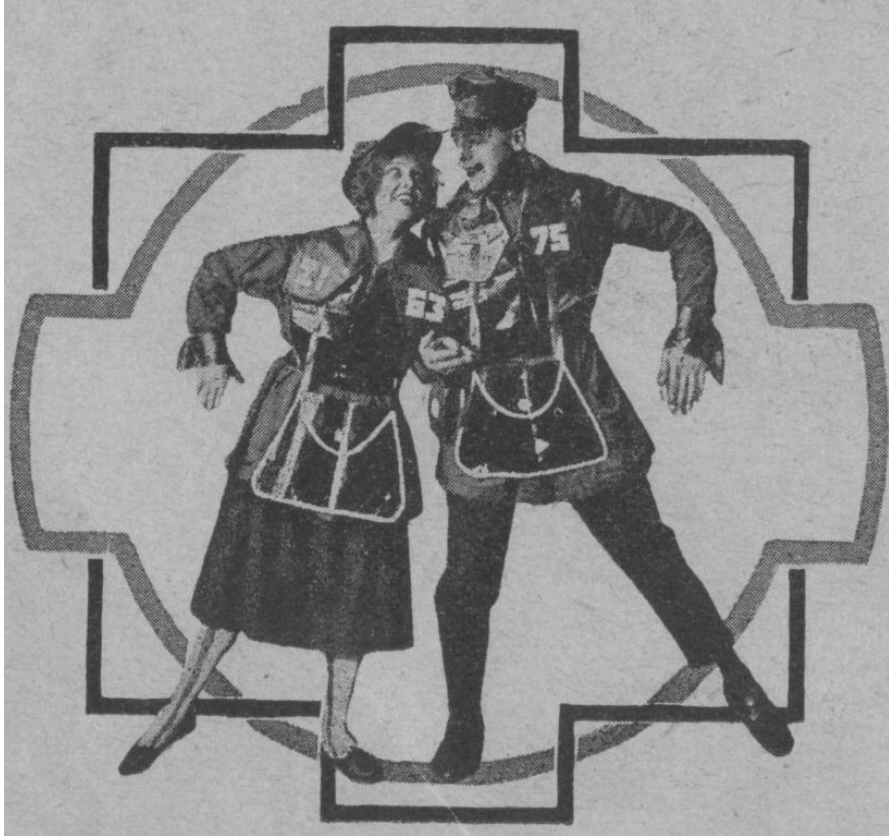


Figure 40. *Chastushki* about the Metro. Costume design by Nina Aizenberg. *Siniia bluza* 71/72 (1927), 38.

Mayakovsky's *chastushki* depict the novelty and dynamism of the future transportation network, the collective nature of subway travel, as well as the joy of moving at high speed underground:

Comrades, Mayakovsky,

To our joy has written,

Chastushki for us,

About a tramway underground.

What's that? Holy cats!

Around Moscow alleyways

Through its guts are being torn

By the steam-shovels of the MKKh [The Moscow Office of Communal
Management]....

I don't want to drive around
I don't trust those road hogs.
I, with little Semka,
Will ride underground.
The bourgeois manner was,
To ride around in automobiles.
But I'll climb down with Tania,
Into the metropolitan.³¹⁴

The erasure of difference between the country and the city is achieved on the Blue Blouse stage not only by images of the city turning its “face to the village” (as one slogan declaimed), raising the educational level of villagers, and organizing their work scientifically, but also by allowing the countryside to turn its face to the city and participate, if only fleetingly, in the marvels of urbanization.

4.2.2 Communism = Soviet Power + Electrification: “Make Way For Lenin’s Little Lamps”

Blue Blouse acts not only celebrated the transformation of the countryside and the horizontal equality that it brought about; they also celebrated the construction of the infrastructure that made that transformation possible, especially the electrification of the countryside. As Widdis notes:

³¹⁴ Maiakovskii, Vladimir. “Chastushki o metropolitene.” *Siniia bluza* 32 (1926), 54-55.

As a unifying network, the power grid was to carry ideological as well as electrical energy. With electric light would come enlightenment (*prosveshchenie*; from *svet* [light], the term clearly expresses the association of light and knowledge): in Lenin's words, "the electrical education of the masses."³¹⁵

One sketch on this theme, "Down With Kerosene and Candles, Make Way for Lenin's Little Lamps!" offered a vivid illustration of Lenin's slogan, "Communism = Soviet Power + Electrification" by staging the struggle between electric light bulbs (popularly known as *lampochki Il'icha*—"Lenin's little lamps") and previous methods of illumination as a part of the class struggle (Figure 41). The sketch begins with the light bulb singing to the tune of the Marseillaise (immediately underscoring the revolutionary nature of electrification):

We'll sing for you a stylish song,...
A song about hydro power
About the electro-USSR
Sing about the white coal...
Water in the river, and from it the waterfall
Gives electricity for huts.....
Let the watery depths begin,
To howl as spinning turbines.
In the village, in the countryside, and in the city,
We reach for the wires.³¹⁶

³¹⁵ Widdis, *Visions* 24.

³¹⁶ "Doloi kerosin i svecha, dorogu lampochke Il'icha." *Siniaia bluza* 32 (1926), 31-35; 31.



Figure 41. The electric light bulb (left) holds the red star, while gas, candle, kerosene, and firewood hold banners with the words of the slogan “Communism = Soviet Power + Electrification” printed on them. *Siniaia bluza* 32 (1926), 31.

Other actors, playing firewood, a candle, kerosene, and gas see their doom in the power of electricity and reminisce about the good old days, eventually beginning to argue amongst themselves. Firewood remembers long years of serving peasants and workers alike, but Kerosene reminds him “You burned their eyes with smoke on those long winter nights.”³¹⁷ The Candle fondly remembers being lit in churches by old ladies, but Firewood reminds her “it isn’t pleasant to sit by you on long, late nights.”³¹⁸ Kerosene laments that they are all the victims of a “purge,” singing:

Were are people of an older mold,
We served as illumination,

³¹⁷ “Doloi kerosin” 33.

³¹⁸ “Doloi kerosin” 33.

In the days of coronations,
And the White emigration.³¹⁹

The Light bulb assures them that they are not being dishonored by their dismissal: “You have served your time; it is time to rest.”³²⁰ The Light bulb then begins to sing of the virtues of electricity before everyone joins in a final chorus celebrating the sources of this new power:

From the Shaturka one, two, three,
From the Kashira River one, two, three,
From the Soviet machine and cooperation,
From Kizelstroi one, two, three,
From the Volkhov River one, two, three,
From the Dnepr—electri-
Yes, -fication.³²¹

The place names cited in this final chorus were the sites of major hydroelectric projects, the most famous of which, Dneprostroi in Zaporizhia, Ukraine, was a keystone of Stalin’s first Five Year Plan. At the time the Blue Blouse was performing this script, however, most of these projects had just barely gotten underway. On the stage, Blue Blouse troupes frequently compressed time as well as space, pulling the future into the present to make the un-hierarchical future visible as it was being built.

³¹⁹ “Doloi kerosin” 34.

³²⁰ “Doloi kerosin” 34.

³²¹ “Doloi kerosin” 35.

4.2.3 “Ded Raeshnik” on the Women’s movement: “On Comrade Kollontai, the New Marriage Law and My Bully of a Wife”

In addition to the improvement of society through equalizing access education, literacy, and electrification, the Blue Blouse also used the stage to imagine a broadening of social equality, staging the new empowerment of peasants and workers, of members of national minorities, and especially of women, devoting entire issues to scripts on the Soviet women’s movement.³²² While these often took the form of comic sketches and songs, on a few notable occasions gender equality was refracted through the lens of “Ded Raeshnik,” the star of the rhyming comic monologues (*raek*) that were featured in most editions of the Living Newspapers (see Figure 3). Dressed in stereotypical peasant clothes, felt boots, and a long beard, Ded Raeshnik’s monologues generally revolved around his inability to adapt to the new way of life produced by the Revolution.

In one *raek* on gender equality, “On Comrade Kollontai, the New Marriage Law, and My Bully of a Wife” by F. Uralov, Ded Raeshnik gives an over-the-top account of his reaction to the family law of 1926, discussing the equal division of property between and husband and wife from the backwards point of view of a male chauvinist:³²³

I came here not to chat,

³²² While several of the important figures in the Blue Blouse movement were women, it is worth noting that almost all of the writers were men, so in issue number 26, which is dedicated to the celebration of International Women’s Day, for example, a half dozen sketches on gender equality, new marriage laws, the Soviet family, and the gender inequality of Islam were written by the usual crowd of male authors (Iuzhanin, Ardov, Argo, Aseev and others) and not one by a woman.

³²³ For a discussion of the law, see Goldman, Wendy Z. “Working-Class Women and the ‘Withering Away’ of the Family: Popular Responses to Family Policy.” Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Richard Stites, eds. *Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991. 125-143.

But as a result of the speech of Comrade Kollontai....³²⁴

Who concretely proposed,

Wives take one ruble out of every two from the snouts of men.

But comrades, this is thievery!....

And after Kollontai's presentation

I've had no peace with my wife....³²⁵

As a result of the wife's equal right to family property, Ded Raeshnik complains:

My wife has become a bully,

Not a day passes without an argument.

If, after draining it, I break a glass accidentally,

The wife swears at me excessively....³²⁶

Ded Raeshnik's inability to do his share of housework, take care of their property, and stay sober leads to more fights until his wife asks for a divorce and they begin to divide up their property by splitting everything into two parts:

From the table I took the top and a few splinters,

From the bookcase one sideboard and two shelves.

We split the pillow, the mattress,

The wardrobe, bed, and a portrait,

And I received my half....³²⁷

³²⁴ Aleksandra Kollontai was a prominent Bolshevik and feminist who was highly critical of the continued inequality of women under socialism.

³²⁵ Uralov, F. "O tovarishche Kollontai, novom zakone o brake I zhene zabiiake." *Siniaia bluza* 30 (1926), 50-53; 50.

³²⁶ Uralov 51.

³²⁷ Uralov 52.

He takes the minute hand from the clock and the burner from the stove. They split their clothes equally as well: he gets half of the blouses and she gets half of the trousers. When they need to divide up their children, he claims he couldn't bear to separate them and insists she take both (thereby avoiding the work of raising children). His original relief at escaping his bully of a wife disappears as the realities of his new single life set in: sleeping on half a bed has made his back ache and, having moved out of his apartment, he has no privacy in his new room. Worse, he still has to go to work, but wearing only half a pair of pants. At the end of the monologue he says in disgust, "There's Kollontai for you, and there's the marriage law too!"³²⁸

As Wendy Goldman notes, "the economic and social consequences of divorce were a recurring theme in the discussions of the new family code."³²⁹ And with good reason too:

Even with the best intentions the average Soviet workingman could not support two families on his wages.... If the male worker became involved with another woman and had a child by her, the court was likely to order him to pay one-third of his wages in child support. This left his original family in serious financial trouble.... The result was unambiguous:... the progressive legislation on divorce was sharply at odds with the economic facts of working-class life.³³⁰

But on the stage, these economic facts counted for little against the progressive vision of gender equality, and the real-life consequences of dividing a household were absorbed into the absurd display of dividing each item. Ded Raeshnik's inability to adjust to these new conditions underlines the need for everyone else to do so in order to demolish gender hierarchy.

³²⁸ Uralov 53.

³²⁹ Goldman 131.

³³⁰ Goldman 134.

4.3 CONTROL OF SPACE: THE STRUGGLE AGAINST CAPITAL

The Revolution and Bolshevik victory in the Civil War did not mark the end of the struggle against capital. As Widdis notes, The Soviet Union was imagined during the 1920s as “implicitly *unbounded*—always on the point of transition into the global workers’ international....”³³¹ While this unboundedness was an expression of the utopian aim of extending Soviet collectivity and equality beyond the borders of the state, it also created the possibility of penetration from outside (a fact underscored by the cult of the border guard that developed during the 1930s).³³² The consequences of this unboundedness appear frequently on the Blue Blouse stage as an ongoing struggle for the control of space. This section examines sketches that explore the conflict between the Soviet Union and its capitalist rivals, celebrate the soldiers engaged in the struggle for the control of space, and warn of enemies hiding within Soviet space.

4.3.1 The External Enemy: The International Review

A standard component of Blue Blouse performances was the “International Review,” an examination of hot issues in Soviet international relations. These were updated frequently and involved a rotating cast of characters: England, France, and America were almost always present, and, depending on the news of the day, might be joined by Germany, Japan, Italy, Poland, Romania, or any number of other states. These reviews could be staged quite simply, with performers wearing a sash announcing the state they represented, but a more exciting way to

³³¹ Widdis, *Visions* 143.

³³² Widdis, *Visions* 144.

stage them was to use the Blue Blouse's "Lubok" technique. *Lubok* is a form of Russian folk art that traditionally features an illustration accompanied by a text created by a wood block print. The Blue Blouse adaptation of *Lubok* to the Living Newspaper stage involved an illustration or a series of illustrations with holes cut out so that performers could put their heads or faces through. When staging international reviews as "Lubok" shows, performers would stick their heads through maps (Figure 42).



Figure 42. "International Review" *Repertuar sinei bluzy 2* (1928), cover.

“International Reviews” traditionally depict the USSR in conflict with other powers, while showing the other states in conflict with each other as well. The first “International Review” printed in *Blue Blouse* begins with the USSR describing its own greatness to the members of the Entente to the tune of a popular song:

Oh, filled with riches is Russia,
With riches my Union is filled,
I will show you Entente,
Russia from all sides.
Filled with grain silos,
Mountains of gold and silver,
Forests, valleys full of flax,
And fish from rivers and seas.³³³

The powers of the Entente reply in chorus, “Give us Concessions! Give us more!” and then each country makes demands in turn: France threatens to bomb the Soviet Union unless it sends over some iron, England wants the Soviet Union to sell its mines to British capitalists, and Italy wants Soviet grain for making Mussolini’s pasta. Then the states begin to quarrel over the possibility that England might betray the Entente by recognizing the Soviet Union as a state. America interrupts the quarrel, complaining of Europe’s hysterics and assuring the USSR that it is reasonable and pragmatic: not only will it recognize the Soviet Union, but it will offer money and machinery... for a price:

The USSR is a success,
And your land is rich,

³³³ “Politobozrenie.” *Siniaia bluza* 1 (1924), 39-47; 39.

And you know
I will give you money.
I will give machines,
I will give cash,
But I will take
Concessions too.³³⁴

It turns out that America is interested in taking much more than any of the others: oil from Baku, coal from the Donbas, and ore from Kursk. After hearing America's offer the European powers agree that they will consider recognizing the Soviet Union, but they must get something in return. The USSR concludes the piece, replying:

Never, never, never, never.
We won't prostrate ourselves defenselessly before you.
We already, already, already, already,
Paid our debts in October!....
Whoever recognizes us not in jest,
Will dance to our tune.³³⁵

The piece is full of topical jokes about the details of Soviet ambassador Kristian Rakovsky's negotiations with the European states, and could have been educational, but is much more effective at conveying the sharp divide between the Soviet Union and the capitalist powers and illustrating the threat—up to and including the resumption of military action—they pose. Importantly, however, this divide is ideological rather than strictly geographic. As other “International Reviews” such as “Hands Off China” show, the struggle between Soviet Power

³³⁴ “Politobozrenie” 45.

³³⁵ “Politobozrenie” 46-47.

and capital for the control of space transcended borders, and could take place in any and every location.³³⁶

4.3.2 Defending Soviet Space: “Red Army”

The Soviet Union represented by the Blue Blouse on the stages of workers’ clubs and beerhalls was not helpless against these threats, however. Dozens of sketches and songs glorifying the Red Army were published in *Blue Blouse*, including a special issue (number 25) devoted entirely to staging living newspapers commemorating Red Army Day. One of these sketches, simply titled “Red Army,” stayed in the professional troupes’ repertoire throughout the 1920s and is noteworthy for its combination of a typically militaristic text with acrobatic staging, requiring the performers constantly to shift back and forth from representing soldiers to representing the tools of war. The piece was composed by Grigorii Burevoi, Nikolai Aseev, and Dmitrii Dolev, with music by Konstantin Listov, and was directed by Aleksander Macheret. The costumes, designed by Nina Aizenberg, featured three different façades, between which performers could alternate by folding fabric and buttoning it in place, allowing them to change on stage between the uniforms of the army, navy, and air force (see Figure 19).

The piece begins with the performers marching on stage in the uniforms of the 1st Calvary (which are distinguishable by the peculiar hat—the *budenovka*—that that unit wore) to a military rhythm chanting “left, left, left right, left.” As they reach center stage they are called to attention by their “commander,” who orders them into formation. The company then sings the

³³⁶ “Ruki proch' ot Kitaia.” *Siniaia bluza* 4 (1924), 4-10.

heroics of the red army during the Revolution (here as elsewhere in Blue Blouse scripts the years of civil war are compressed neatly into “October”):

Before you are the red
Defenders of the state
No predator can tear us with their claws.
We truly understand
That our flag
Waves for a world-wide October.³³⁷

The performers then form an artillery cannon with their bodies (Figure 43), which imitates firing by raising and lowering the central performer (the “barrel” of the cannon), while the two performers playing “wheels” summersault forwards and backwards to create the illusion of recoil. The commander stands to the side and names the targets:

Chase the bankers out of their foxholes—
Fire!
Against capitalist buildup—
Fire!
Against the louses from Amsterdam—
Fire!³³⁸

The selection of targets turns the force of the Red Army from concrete military targets to much more abstract threats—bankers and capitalism—against which the struggle for the control of space was now imagined to be carried out.

³³⁷ Burevoi, Gr., Aseev, and Dolev. “Krasnaia Armia.” *Siniia bluza* 25 (1926), 6-13; 6. The Piece was also filmed for *Sovkinozhurnal* 8.17 (1928). RGAKFD 1529.

³³⁸ Burevoi, Aseev, and Dolev 9.

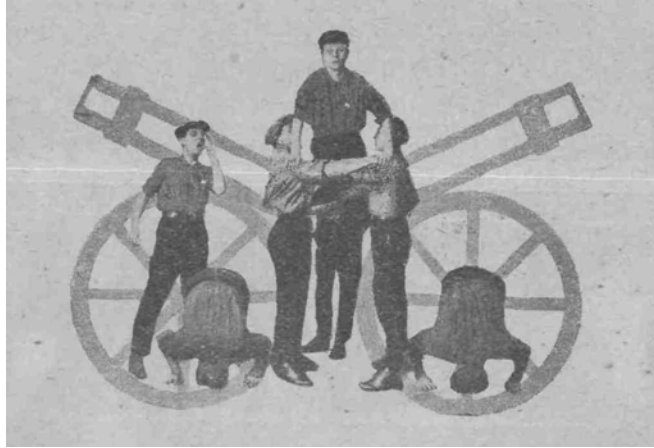


Figure 43. The cannon, ready to fire in “Red Army.” *Siniaia bluza* 25 (1926), 8.

The commander then gives the order “Red Fleet to the front!,” and the performers shift their costumes to the uniform of sailors. Locking their arms beneath the shoulders of the performers next to them, the Fleet imitates the rocking of the waves while singing of the treacherousness of Europe (Figure 44):

Comrades no fine phrases
Will the bourgeois public understand.
In other lands they think to use gas
To snuff out the workers’ republic....
If you want peace, prepare for war,
Or else you’ll be devoured.³³⁹

³³⁹ Burevoi, Aseev, and Dolev 9-10.



Figure 44. The Red Navy in “Red Army.” RGAKFD 1529. Reproduced with permission.

Here the performers transform again, this time into pilots of the Red Air Force, and create their next acrobatic construction—an airplane (Figure 45). With this transformation, the tone of the performance shifts from the dangers of foreign enemies to the wonders of flight as the actors chant “with the rhythm of a motor”:

Our friend—
The flying machine
In our sky...
We cover all
With the border on the left
There’s nothing to breathe

At ten thousand meters
It's nothing to travel
Thousands of versts....
Pilots, pilots,
Young pilots
The strong wings
Of the world Commune.³⁴⁰



Figure 45. The airplane from “Red Army.” RGAKFD 1529. Reproduced with permission.

The performers return to the uniforms of the Red Army for the final number, dedicated to the heroism of the volunteer, reminding members of the audience of the virtues of helping to defend the state from the foreign threat:

³⁴⁰ Burevoi, Aseev, and Dolev 10.

I've joined the Red Army
So guys, am I glorious?
I've got my rifle on my shoulder
And a saber in my hand
So walk, legs... fear not,
Balalaika strum away
I won't be long
Away from my village.³⁴¹

The performance ends with an “apotheosis,” in which the actors form three columns and pass a ribbon between themselves to create a red star (Figure 46). With this action the soldiers transform from the defenders of Soviet space into a symbol of that space itself.



Figure 46. “Apotheosis:” The red star in “Red Army.” RGAKFD 1529. Reproduced with permission.

³⁴¹ Burevoi, Aseev, and Dolev 13.

4.3.3 The Internal Enemy: Spichkin the Impostor

The struggle for the control of space that Blue Blouse performances represented onstage was not only fought against external enemies. Other foes, just as dangerous, lurked within the territory of the Soviet Union itself. One such enemy who appeared in several Blue Blouse sketches, was Spichkin (whose name is derived from *spichka*, the Russian word for a match), an impostor who satisfied his base urges by imitating the speech of Bolsheviks (Figure 47). One of these sketches, “In General, and in Essence” by Vladimir Mass and I. Verkhovtsev, takes place in a workers’ club.



Figure 47. Nina Aizenberg. Costume design for “Spichkin.” Bakrushin State Central Theatre Museum. Reproduced with permission.

Four members of the Komsomol (three male and one female) are relaxing at the club when Spichkin walks in. Spichkin turns to the first and accosts him, in a pastiche of Bolshevik phrases, for drinking a beer:

Have you thought about the future? Have you thought about the revolution? Here you sit, poisoning your organism with beer—to you it is nothing, but to the world revolution it might turn out to be quite unfortunate: who will defend it if the next generation—just like you—falls into drinking? Have you thought of that?³⁴²

A humorous argument ensues, and when Spichkin claims authority and threatens to make the conversation “completely official” the youth gives up and leaves the club. Spichkin then turns to the next member of the Komsomol and attacks him for flirting with the girl in the club:

For shame, Comrade! Do you care nothing for the future of our organization?.... I, comrade, am not against love but what kind of example are you setting? You made contact with that woman. Contact! Could that cause a split in our collective? Without a doubt. Could that cause our regional organization to fracture? Absolutely. From there could the controversy rise to a national scale? It categorically would rise. Could that cause a break in the International Komintern of Youth? Who could say it wouldn't. Now, comrade, do you see where these relations are leading?³⁴³

As with the first, the second Komsomol member argues with Spichkin until he threatens official action. Finally he turns to the third male Komsomol member, who is reading a newspaper and asks:

³⁴² Mass and Vekhovtsev, “V obshchem” 4-5.

³⁴³ Mass and Vekhovtsev, “V obshchem” 6-7.

Have you turned your face to the countryside?... I turn my face to the countryside quite often. Darkness, you know, is unconditional. They understand nothing of historical materialism or anything else. And the avant-garde is to blame. Here we wallow in literature, but there you can't even find a newspaper. I, comrade, in my capacity as the under-officer of discipline send literature to the countryside. Perhaps you, comrade, would like to take an active part in this work? For a start, you could donate that newspaper....³⁴⁴

The Komsomol member's reluctance to part with his newspaper once again leads to threats of official action, and once again the Komsomol member gives up and leaves.

Now all but alone in the club, Spichkin begins to relax. He drinks the first Komsomol member's beer, reads the third member's newspaper, and begins to flirt with the second member's girl. When he finishes the beer, he produces a bottle of vodka and convinces the girl to drink shots with him. After a few drinks he begins to sing *chastushki* that combine political phrases with sexual innuendo:

To her, everyone is handsome,
To her, everyone is dear,
And so around her hang,
Cadres of young communists³⁴⁵

Once the drunken revelry reaches its peak, the three Komsomol members return and now threaten Spichkin with official action themselves. As they leave to find the club's manager, Spichkin appeals directly to the audience: "Comrades! Can you call that solidarity? We should

³⁴⁴ Mass and Vekhovtsev, "V obshchem" 7-8.

³⁴⁵ Mass and Vekhovtsev, "V obshchem" 9.

chase the likes of those from the organization to keep them from staining the reputation of our young workers.”³⁴⁶ Then he quickly leaves before the manager gets there.

The theme of the ‘imposter’ was an important one in early Soviet society. Historian Sheila Fitzpatrick, in her collection of essays *Tear Off The Masks*, argues that the “the Bolsheviks, cherishing an imagined class community yet inheriting a shattered and fragmented class structure in Russia after the Revolution, found themselves obliged to invent the classes that their Marxist theoretical commitments told them must exist.”³⁴⁷ The result of this paradox was that Soviet citizens were required to construct their class identities out of their personal biographies in a situation where some class identities were clearly more acceptable than others. Because of this, people frequently handpicked details to foreground and details to hide, creating a great deal of instability around the single most important marker of identity in the Soviet Union. As some degree of imposture was the rule rather than exception, Soviet citizens both regularly lived in fear of being unmasked and sought to unmask others. The Spichkin plays both draw attention to this problem and suggest that it is less significant than it appears: impostors can be identified and young communists can identify them. The internal threat to Soviet space can therefore be stopped and the struggle for the control of space can be won.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁶ Mass and Vekhovtsev, “V obshchem” 10.

³⁴⁷ Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *Tear Off The Masks: Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia*.

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005. 29.

³⁴⁸ It is worth pointing out that these plays may have had the opposite effect as well. As Mark Lipovetsky argues, tricksters and conmen were among the most popular characters throughout the Soviet period because of the necessity for Soviet citizens to become tricksters themselves in order to survive: “the immense popularity of the trickster is mainly justified by the cultural need to provide symbolic justification to... the mechanism of cynical survival and deception that existed behind the ideologically approved simulacra of the state-run economy and ‘classless’ society....” *Charms of the Cynical Reason: The Trickster’s Transformation in Soviet and Post-Soviet Culture*. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011. 17. It is not difficult to imagine some spectators sympathizing with Spichkin’s use of the club as a place to drink, pick up girls, and relax rather than to engage in extra-curricular political development.

4.4 PRODUCTION OF SPACE: STAGING THE WORKERS' STATE

In addition to imagining the world around them and the place of Soviet workers in it, Blue Blouse performances also staged a utopian vision of a new society—one that radically broke with its past. Workers staging Blue Blouse shows could allow themselves to exist temporarily—if only imaginatively—in the society that they were trying to build. This section will examine the way Blue Blouse performances produced an imaginary workers' state on stage through an idealization of the human body and its relationship to industrial production, a vision of everyday life in a society that had outgrown class, and the depiction of a culture so radically different from that of the previous centuries that old masterpieces ceased to make any sense whatsoever.

4.4.1 The Machine Dance: “Ford and Us”

One of the most famous categories of Blue Blouse pieces was the “Machine Dance.” Originated by the modernist choreographer Nikolai Foregger, “Machine Dances” involved performers acrobatically building a “machine” with their bodies, which then moved to an industrial rhythm as the performers raised and lowered various body parts (or each other).³⁴⁹ When Foregger's theatre burned down in 1924, he and most of his staff began to work for the Blue Blouse and “Machine Dances” became a regular part of the repertoire of professional and do-it-yourself troupes.³⁵⁰ Because of the athleticism involved, “Machine Dances” merged a utopian representation of industrial production with the idealized human bodies that were the goal of the Soviet Union's physical culture campaign. As Mike O'Mahony argues, the Soviet

³⁴⁹ Gordon, Mel. “Foregger and the Dance of the Machines.” *The Drama Review* 19.1(Mar. 1975) 68-73. Leach 122-130.

³⁵⁰ Uvarova, *Estradnyi teatr* 112.

pursuit of a “new man” blurred the line between athleticism and work: “labor and leisure could be conflated usefully: increased leisure time, the reward for greater labor productivity, simultaneously provided opportunities to indulge in leisure pursuits... and thus potentially to improve fitness, health and the capacity to develop further labor potential.”³⁵¹

One of the most well known of these “Machine Dances” accompanied the sketch “Ford and Us” by Liubin and Grigorii Burevoi, which was commissioned by the Central Committee of the All-Union Council of Popular Education (VSNKh) and staged by Tamara Tomiss, one of Foregger’s students in 1926.³⁵² In photographs of the performance, actors appear in shorts and striped athletic shirts beneath a banner with the slogan “Fordism in the Factories.” The show begins as the performers enter and remind the audience of Ford’s principles of industrial organization with the chant:

In America
Lives Mr. Ford,
That famous capitalist.
He achieved a technical record,
By using a certain method.
It contains simple principles
That achieve complete success
Material moves through the factory
On an assembly line without cease.³⁵³

But, they go on to explain:

³⁵¹ O’Mahony 23.

³⁵² Liubin i Burevoi. “My i Ford.” *Siniaia Bluza* 34 (1926). 5-14.

³⁵³ Liubin and Burevoi 13.

In the land of “Freedom”
Ford’s assembly lines
Are no more, in the end,
Than the chains of exploitation!³⁵⁴

A speaker then points out that Ford’s method leads to exploitation only in a land ruled by capitalism, while the other performers organize themselves into a “machine” that consists of three columns joined by a female performer in the middle. Beneath the columns two more performers lie with their feet together, moving their legs back and forth like pistons (Figure 48). As the machine moves, the performers proclaim in unison:

Work evenly and collectively,
During our time at work,
Without tiring, without a break,
With total order,

According to the principles of NOT [The Scientific Organization of Labor].³⁵⁵

As the machine chugs along, the performers then individually call out various benefits of Ford’s system: “Less waste! Higher quality! Lower costs!”³⁵⁶ Then the number ends as performers break into song to announce that “these principles will find use/ in the hands of the working class!”³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴ Liubin and Burevoi 13.

³⁵⁵ Liubin and Burevoi 13

³⁵⁶ Liubin and Burevoi 13-14.

³⁵⁷ Liubin and Burevoi 13-14.

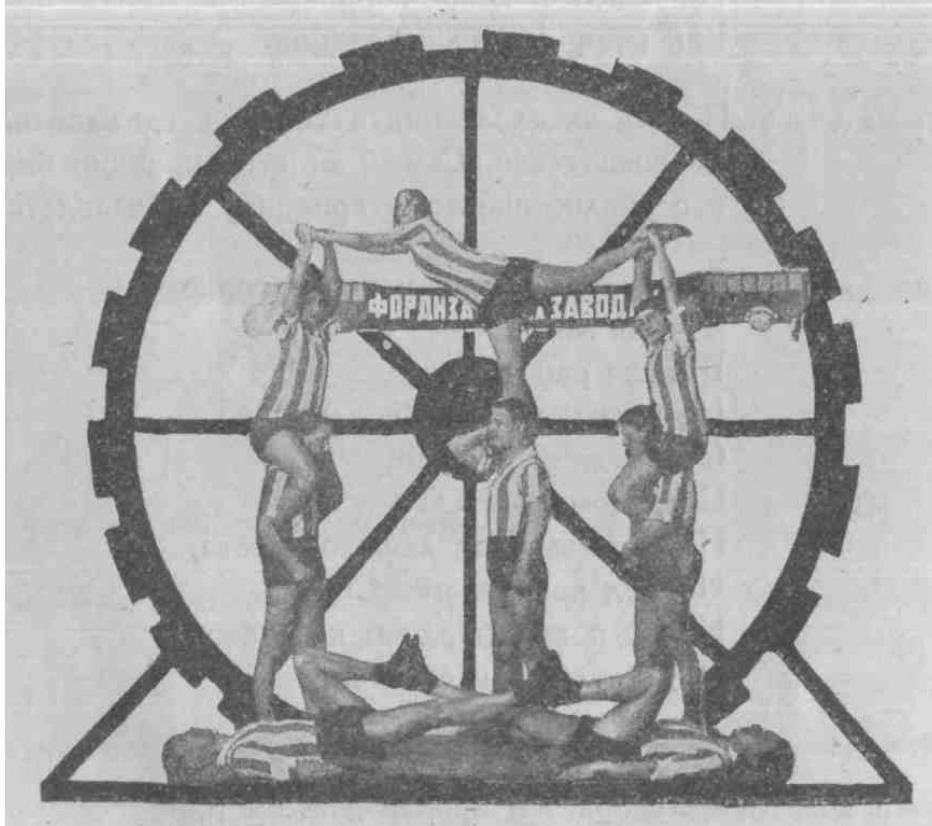


Figure 48. “Machine Dance” from “Ford and Us.” The background was added for publication in the magazine by graphic designer Anastasiia Akhtyrko. *Siniaia bluza* 34 (1926). 14.

The “Machine Dance” that accompanied the piece is the key to the argument produced by the sketch. Any question regarding the possibility that labor practices that are exploitative under capitalism are nevertheless emancipatory under socialism is answered by the embodiment of that emancipation on stage in the skilled bodies of the performers, which move in coordinated precision, demonstrating the joyful unity of bodies and machines that would accompany the Fordist organization of Soviet Industry. The choreography produced a socialist utopia of industrial production without alienated labor on the stages of workers clubs.

4.4.2 Revisiting the Classics: “Moliere in a Blue Blouse”

Although most top Bolshevik cultural figures like Anatoly Lunacharsky felt that the culture of the past had much to offer the Soviet Union, many of the artists in the new state—ranging from Futurists to their Proletarianist opponents—argued that the new society required a radical break with the culture of the past.³⁵⁸ As can be seen from the examples given in this chapter, the Blue Blouse movement, with its eclectic approach to style, transferred this tension to the stage, borrowing popular pre-revolutionary forms such as *chastushki* and *raek*, but including them in the same evening of variety theatre with avant-garde “Machine Dances.” Vladimir Mass’s “Soviet Vaudeville,” “The Jealousy of Barbule, or Moliere in a Blue Blouse” (1928) offers a comic treatment of this tension, staging the Soviet break with the past by revisiting the themes of the classics.³⁵⁹

The play, composed in rhyming couplets, opens with a chorus laying out the rationale for what is to come:

So as a joke, as an example,
Having chosen a play at random,
We’ll play for you now Moliere
But in a completely new key.

The masks created earlier,

³⁵⁸ For an example of the avant-garde’s rejection of the classics see Tret’iakov, Sergei. “The New Leo Tolstoy.” *October* 118 (Fall 2006), 45-50 (originally published in *Novyi Lef* 1 (1927)); For a discussion of the proletarianist’s position, see Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992. 104-112; for a discussion of Lunacharsky’s defense of the culture of the past, see Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts under Lunacharsky*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970. 138-161.

³⁵⁹ Before its publication in *Blue Blouse*, the piece was first staged as “Moliere with the Wrong Side Out” at the theatre at the House of Printers, and can, therefore, be seen as commentary immediately addressed to other cultural workers. Uvarova, Elizaveta. “Moskva s točki zreniia.” Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1991, 81.

Resemble our own quite a bit.
In new clothes each of them,
Still perform in our day.
That which is old, we have made young,
To whatever degree necessary.³⁶⁰

The chorus is followed by a monologue, in which Barbule—a good Soviet citizen who likes to go to the workers club and play chess—outlines the unhappiness caused by Angelique, his wife, whose class origins are in the petit bourgeoisie. Angelique, unlike Barbule, is light-minded, has no goals, refuses to join the local women’s section, spends her evenings at parties, allows men to chase after her, affects aristocratic manners, likes American films, and dances the foxtrot and the Charleston. As a good Soviet citizen he is unsure how to rectify his marital situation as the tools of the past (public humiliation, verbal abuse, and beating) are all “unethical.” So he turns to his neighbor, a member of the Marxist intelligentsia, a pedant, for advice. The pedant stops him right away:

Excuse me.
I don’t understand how you can speak to me,
As if we could have a conversation,
Without explaining ahead of time your social situation,
Your background, current environment, and world view.
Without explaining if you work at a factory or a plant,
And the nationality of your wife,
And the nationality of yourself,

³⁶⁰ Mass, Vladimir. “Revnost’ Barbul’e ili Mol’er v sinei bluze.” *Siniaia bluza* 74 (1928); 22-36; 22.

And how your mother was employed,
And how your father and grandfather were employed,
And how, finally, you, yourself, are employed.³⁶¹

He then continues to expound at length in the same vein, using the jargon of Marxist theory and Soviet policy to describe his ability to analyze any issue from the perspective of base and superstructure, and their relationship to class warfare. Finally at the end of his monologue the pedant asks Barbule about the problem he wishes to discuss. When he is told, he informs Barbule that he is not concerned with personal issues, but only with social ones, and blames him for wasting so much of his time (even though it was the pedant who has been speaking the whole time).

The scene then shifts to a meeting between Angelique and a NEPman, Valère, who declares his love for her and his desire to shower her with gifts.³⁶² Angelique is delighted, exclaiming that “the main thing is love—and automobiles.”³⁶³ It turns out that she finds her husband’s post-revolutionary persona ever so boring:

He understands nothing,
Not of beauty or of fun.
Living with him is real torture....
But you aren’t like my spouse.
I see a new world all around,
That can’t be described in words,
When I am with you.

³⁶¹ Mass, “Revnost' Barbul'e” 23.

³⁶² See footnote 307 for a discussion of the NEPman.

³⁶³ Mass, “Revnost' Barbul'e” 27.

They arrange another tryst and Angelique returns home only to quarrel viciously with her husband. Their noisy accusations awaken her father and bring the pedant running, and they make a tenuous peace to avoid a scandal (pleasing her father) and preserve the social order (pleasing the pedant). But the argument has made her late for her meeting with Valère. When Angelique tries to meet him at a dancehall, Barbule refuses to allow her to leave the house and the argument erupts again. It becomes clear that the two are now completely incompatible: Barbule is destined to become a cuckold and Angelique to remain miserable. But as the conflict reaches a climax, the tension is suddenly resolved when they decide to get a divorce, an action that had been made both legal and simple to initiate in one of the earliest laws instated by the Bolsheviks. The intellectual reappears, eager to resolve their dispute once and for all, and is shocked to hear that the situation had been resolved easily and to the satisfaction of all parties: “But that is too simple a solution to such a complex problem! It’s unbelievable.” “Unbelievable, but true,” replies another witness.³⁶⁴

Mass’s play borrows familiar elements from a classic author—character types, conflicts, and themes—and shows their continued relevance. As the chorus says in the epilogue, “Even though the Soviet world is new,/ all the same there is no shortage,/ of long-winded fools.” But it uses these parallels to powerfully illustrate the Revolutionary break with the culture of the past, as the play’s familiar conflict is resolved with comically shocking ease: what was a problem in the old world is resolved simply in the new Soviet society. For the culture of the past to remain relevant, it must be presented “in an entirely different key.”³⁶⁵

³⁶⁴ Mass, “Revnost' Barbul'e” 36.

³⁶⁵ Mass, “Revnost' Barbul'e” 36.

4.4.3 The first Soviet Musical: *Koroleva Erred*

In 1927 the Blue Blouse's "Foundational Troupe" staged *Koroleva Erred*, a three act musical comedy, which they billed as the first Soviet musical. Much of the top talent associated with the movement was involved in the production: it was directed by Tomiss, featured a score by Konstantin Listov with a libretto by Mikhail Vol'pin from a scenario by Macheret, and Nina Aizenberg designed the costumes.³⁶⁶ Tomiss's direction relied heavily on choreography and acrobatics, so that the show could tour to any venue. She even created all of the sets using twelve chairs that could be assembled and draped with different fabrics to build other kinds of furniture (Figure 49).³⁶⁷ *Koroleva Erred* provoked a great deal of controversy within the Blue Blouse movement both because, as a full length work, some felt it was too far from the movement's origin in short forms, and because the piece was an example of the lighter fare that many felt was a departure from serious work.³⁶⁸ But the piece was also popular with workers and made its way into the repertoire of many Blue Blouse troupes.³⁶⁹ *Koroleva Erred* is a Soviet comedy of errors, in which characters repeatedly mistake each other's class identity (and, on occasion, their own). Its resolution, however, depicts a young generation without meaningful class distinctions, essentially staging the classless society, towards which that the socialist state was striving.

³⁶⁶ The script and score took up the entirety of issue 63/64. Vol'pin, M[Ikhail]. "Koroleva oshiblas'." *Siniaia bluza* 63/64 (1927), 1-75.

³⁶⁷ Tomiss, Tamara. "Izobretatel'nost' v klubnykh postanovkakh." *Siniaia bluza* 63-64 (1927), 75-76.

³⁶⁸ Vechorskii, P. Iu. "Chto diktuets' zhizn'." *Siniaia bluza* 69-70 (1927), 56-61. 59.

³⁶⁹ "Chto nas volnuet." *Siniaia bluza* 73 (1928), 53-59.



Figure 49. *Koroleva Erred.* Korloeva (center) with two members of the Komsomol. *Siniaia bluza* 71/72 (1927), 28.

The play begins with a prologue that clearly sets out the issues of class identity and the ease with which it can be mistaken, as Varia, a young member of the Komsomol, explains that the title of the play is misleading. It seems that the character who will err should be a queen (*koroleva*; pronounced kor-o-LYE-va), but is in fact Varia, herself, a member of the working class whose last name is Koroleva—pronounced kor-o-LYO-va but typographically indistinguishable from the other word (see Figure 17). As Varia explains, “there are no more queens/ this is a contemporary operetta.”³⁷⁰

³⁷⁰ Vol'pin 3.

Following the prologue, Varia and Petia, Varia's boyfriend and fellow member of the Komsomol, have an argument because Petia wants to get married, but while Varia loves him, she wants to devote herself to the party and is uninterested in having a baby, which she claims is the inevitable consequence of marriage. The issue is one of some urgency because Petia will soon be sent on a diplomatic mission to Paris and wants Varia to accompany him. When Petia storms off, angered by Varia's refusal, Varia is approached by a girl Fitsa (an uncommon name indicating membership in a bourgeois family), who is frustrated because she is "a modern girl" but her parents are outdated (*otstalye*), and she has run away, deciding either to emigrate or "join the komsomol forever" (Figure 50).³⁷¹ Varia is unimpressed by Fitsa, whom she dismisses as bourgeois, and after Fitsa tells her of her desire to live in Paris, Varia suggests she talk to Petia, thinking that her enthusiasm for Paris might convince him not to go there. However, upon hearing that Petia will be moving to Paris, Fitsa decides that she is in love with him. She introduces herself to him, explains that she is wavering in her resolve to join the Komsomol, and asks him to visit her at her house to convince her that it is the right decision. Petia, always happy to win someone for the cause, agrees, just as Fitsa's parents, the Luzhins, arrive, demanding that their daughter be returned to them (see Figure 5 for Aizenberg's costume design for the Mother). They are every bit as bourgeois as Fitsa described them, and are outraged that she is making them late for a party that they have arranged to introduce her to the man they intend for her to marry. Eventually she is returned to their care, but not before the father drops a letter detailing the plans of the "F-A party." Varia finds the letter, assumes that the F-A party is the Party of

³⁷¹ The Komsomol is a youth organization, so her threat to join it "forever" is an indication that she has no idea what she is talking about, but it also pokes fun at the fact that people sometimes remained members of a "youth organization" into their 30s. Vol'pin 6.

Fascist-Agrarians, and resolves to report Fitsa's family, but also decides to infiltrate the Luzhins' party.

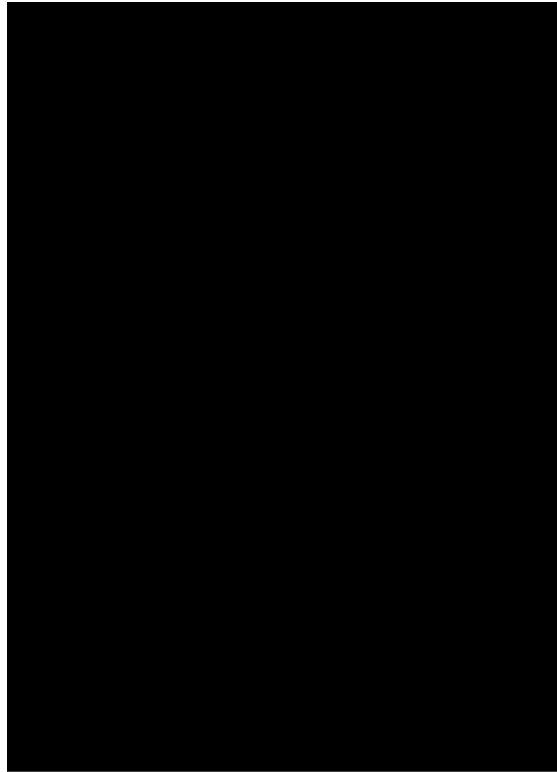


Figure 50. Nina Aizenberg. Costume design for "Fitsa" *Koroleva Erred. Siniia bluza 63/64* (1927), 7.

Act two takes place at the Luzhins' residence. Fitsa is introduced to Tolia (Figure 51), the man her father has chosen to be her husband, but she is not interested in him because he is just as conservative as her parents. Fitsa tells him that she cannot love him, but he resolves not to give up. As the guests begin to dance the foxtrot, Varia arrives, disguised in an elegant dress (Figure 52), and begins to try to extract information on the F-A party. While they are thus occupied, Petia arrives and Tolia hides in order to listen to his conversation with Fitsa. Fitsa explains that she is in love with him, that she hates her parent's decadence, and promises that if he will marry her, she "will be terribly, terribly party-minded,/ The most party-minded lady in

Paris.”³⁷² Petia reacts to the idea of marrying her with horror, calling her “bourgeois to the marrow of her bones,” “a canary,” and worse, but this only makes her love him more: “Oh, Petia, your voice is so powerful!”³⁷³ When he leaves, Tolia emerges, thinking he now knows how to win Fitsa’s love and repeats Petia’s insults. As he is doing so, however, her father walks by, and, shocked that he could be so mistaken about Tolia’s political views, orders him to leave his daughter alone.

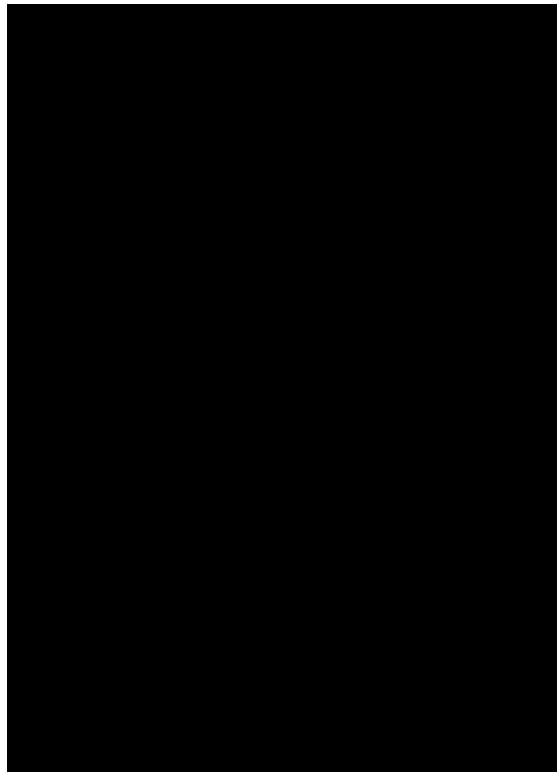


Figure 51. Nina Aizenberg. Costume design for “Tolia” *Koroleva Erred. Siniaia bluza* 63/64 (1927), 15.

³⁷² Vol'pin 22.

³⁷³ Vol'pin 22-23.



Figure 52. Nina Aizenerg. Costume Design for Varia at the party. *Koroleva Erred. Siniia bluz* 63/64 (1927), 23.

Tolia wonders to himself how things could go so wrong:

I don't understand—what does he want?....

In my opinion, I'm a catch...

What's not to want? I can't understand.

Do I believe in God? I believe in God.

Am I against taxes? I'm against taxes....

Am I for larger apartments? I am for it,

And I'll tell any housing commissar to their face.

Did I like *Days of the Turbins*?³⁷⁴

³⁷⁴ The highly controversial 1926 production of Bulgakov's play at the Moscow Art Theatre is presented here as a sort of political litmus test, although the second line of the joke shows that this test had achieved enough of a life of its own that one could decide to like the play or not without watching it.

I liked it, even if I haven't seen it.³⁷⁵

He then guesses that it is precisely his conservatism that is objectionable—perhaps for political reasons Fitsa's father wants her to marry a Komsomol member. For the love of Fitsa, he resolves, from that point on, to be a member of the Komsomol. Varia enters, looking for Luzhin, and a humorous exchange with Tolia ensues. He tells her that she should ask someone else where Luzhin is, that he is a Komsomol member and is sick of speaking to members of the bourgeoisie. She tells him her true identity and, after Tolia overcomes his skepticism that a Komsomol member could wear such a dress, Varia becomes convinced that he is there undercover as well, and begins to tell him what she has learned about the F-A Party. Petia returns, having forgotten his hat, and sees them together. Seeing Varia in an expensive dress speaking to a monocle-wearing dandy convinces him that Fitsa might not be so bourgeois after all, and he apologizes to her. She reaffirms her commitment to him and the Party, and Petia agrees to marry Fitsa to spite Varia. Just as Varia and Tolia learn of Petia and Fitsa's engagement, the police arrive to respond to Varia's tip and bring everyone in for questioning about the F-A Party.

Act Three takes place at police headquarters as one by one everyone is questioned. After Fitsa and her mother are released, Tolia is questioned, and as a show of his new-found political consciousness he denounces Luzhin on the basis of what Varia had told him. Luzhin admits to his conservatism but adamantly denies being a part of any counter-revolutionary party. When the letter is brought forth as evidence against him he explains everything: the "F-A party" is not a political party but the proposed wedding party of Fitsa and Tolia (a diminutive for Anatolii). Varia apologizes for her error and Petia, relieved to hear she was undercover at the bourgeois

³⁷⁵ Vol'pin 24.

party, again asks her to marry him. This time she agrees. Fitsa, thrilled that Tolia is not, after all, a throwback like her parents (as he demonstrated with his denunciation of her father) agrees to marry him as well. Because the police station doubles as the marriage licensing office, both couples are able to be married immediately.³⁷⁶

Koroleva Erred revolves around a number of mistakes, but Varia's primary error was not the fact that she reported Luzhin as a "Fascist-Agrarian." Instead, the fault was her initial rejection of Fitsa, who might not look like a prospective Komsomol member, but who had in fact turned against the lifestyle of her parents. The double marriage at the end of the play punctuates its depiction of class society slowly but surely withering away as modern young people abandon the values of their parents. Importantly, the conclusion doesn't rest on a radical conversion: there is no indication that Fitsa and Tolia will become the ideal Komsomol members that Varia and Petia are. But it does imagine a new classless society that is large enough for all of them.

4.5 CONCLUSION

On the stages of workers' clubs all across the Soviet Union, Blue Blouse troupes produced and reproduced a representation of the new space created by the Soviet state. They imagined this space as fundamentally collective, de-emphasizing the individual in every sphere of Soviet life, from politics, to the workplace, to the family. They also imagined the new order as egalitarian, struggling against hierarchies of space and hierarchies of people, staging works dealing with the transformation of the countryside and women's rights. The Soviet Union was still waiting for

³⁷⁶ This device is also used in Iurii Zheliabuzhkii's film *Cigarette Girl from Mosselprom* (1924).

other revolutions in the 1920s, and this internationalism placed the new state at odds with the capitalist nations of the world. Blue Blouse troupes staged the struggle of these groups to control space, envisioning Soviet citizens vigilantly defending their gains against enemies, both external and internal. Finally, Blue Blouse troupes produced on stage an image of the utopian space towards which they thought the Soviet Union was moving—one in which man and machine merged into a choreographic vision of unalienated labor, one that was so radically different from what came before that the culture of the past needed revision to remain intelligible, and one in which class distinctions faded away as the generations of “throwbacks” quietly died out.

5.0 AT THE LOCAL LEVEL: THE BLUE BLOUSE IN KHARKIV

We're the Living Newspaper "October!"
Hey Villagers, Village women and Youths!
We'll tell you everything in rhymes,
How we fought our enemies
In bloody bygone days,
How lords and their underlings ran away,
How the Whites were routed,
How into the sea, into the black they were chased
By our army, glorious and red!
And how now the free land
Daily, at a rapid pace, sets out
Our new tasks.
Support the achievements of October!!
—"Entre" for a Ukrainian Living Newspaper³⁷⁷

In the preceding chapters I have examined the Blue Blouse movement and its role on the production and reproduction of early Soviet space by considering the movement as a whole, citing specific troupes or performances as examples illustrating the ranges of tendencies and possibilities that it generated. This chapter will take a narrower focus, exploring in depth the activities of Blue Blouseniks, their imitators, and their competitors in a specific place—Kharkiv, the capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Rather than opposing “the Blue Blouse in place” to “The Blue Blouse in space,” I follow Doreen Massey in understanding place as

³⁷⁷ Ми жива газета „Жовтен”!/ Гей, селяни, селянка й молодь!/ Ми розкажемо все по черзі,/ Як колись з ворогами боролись/ У минулі криваві дні./ Як пани й підпанки тікали,/ Як згубили білі погони,/ Як їх у море, в чорне загнала/ Наша армія, славно, червона!/ А тепер, коли вільна земля,/ Повстають що-денно й хутко/ Нам нові завдання./ Зміцнювати Жовтневі здобутки!! “peredohra.” *Sil's'kii teatr* 8 (1926), 24.

fundamentally interwoven with the relational quality of space, as “a temporary constellation,” in which “spatial narratives meet up or form configurations.... But where the succession of meetings, the accumulations of weavings and encounters build up a history.”³⁷⁸ Treating Kharkiv as such a “throwntogether” constellation, rather than a fixed point, as a process rather than a constant, means considering the city alongside Soviet space—and its Living Newspapers alongside the movement as a whole—by considering the ways in which these local entities participate in, resist, shape, and are shaped by these larger processes—while simultaneously insisting upon their uniqueness.

5.1 KHARKIV IN THE 1920S

Ukraine was the site of some of the heaviest fighting to occur in the Civil War that followed the 1917 Bolshevik uprising, as Red, White, German, Polish, Anarchist, and Nationalists armies vied for control of the western border of the former Russian Empire. In June 1920 the Red Army captured Kyiv for the fourth and final time, the 1921 Treaty of Riga finalized the border between Poland and Soviet Ukraine, and in 1922 the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was created, bringing Ukraine into federation with other national republics.³⁷⁹ Kharkiv (Russian: Khar'kov) was named the capital of the newly created Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, as it had been the main base of support for the Bolsheviks during the Civil War and was less closely associated

³⁷⁸ Massey 139.

³⁷⁹ On the Civil War and the establishment of Soviet authority, see Yekelchuk, Serhiy. *Ukraine Birth of a Modern Nation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. 67-84 and 88-92.

with Ukrainian separationists than Kyiv, which had served as the capital of the independent Ukrainian states that had existed between 1917 and 1920.³⁸⁰

Kharkiv, the fifth largest city in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, was an industrial city located 25 miles from the Russian border, and like all major Ukrainian cities, had a multiethnic, polyphonic population. In 1926 Kharkiv had a population of 415,000, made up primarily of 160,000 Ukrainians (39%), 154,000 Russians (38%), and 81,000 Jews (20%), as well as several small populations of minority groups, including Germans, Belorussians, Armenians, and Poles.³⁸¹ Despite the plurality of ethnic Ukrainians, Kharkiv was (and still is) a predominantly Russophone city—fewer than 100,000 of its citizens counted Ukrainian as their native language.

The non-correspondence of ethnicity and native language created numerous impediments to the implementation of the linguistic Ukrainization policy pursued by government of the Ukrainian SSR. The use of Russian by ethnic Ukrainians was viewed as a legacy of Tsarist imperialism that should be liquidated as quickly as possible, but Russian speakers (of every ethnicity) were often disinclined to learn to operate in a new language and passively resisted policies aimed at the linguistic transformation of the city. As a result, targets for Ukrainization routinely went unmet, leaving language one of the central tensions in the cultural life of Kharkiv for the duration of the 1920s.³⁸² This tension had an important impact on do it-yourself theatres at the end of the decade as performers in Russian speaking troupes were pressured to perform in their second language (Ukrainian). In, for example, an article titled, “Let’s Learn Our

³⁸⁰ Yekelchuk, 89. Luckij, George S.N. *Literary Politics in Soviet Ukraine, 1917-1934*. 2nd edition. Durham: Duke University Press, 1990. 7.

³⁸¹ 1926 was the date of the first Soviet census. All of the demographic data included in this chapter was published in *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1926 goda*. T. 12. Moskva: Izdanie TsSU Soiuza SSR, 1928. On the methodology of the census and the essentialist understanding of nationality that informed it, see Hirsch 114-123.

³⁸² On linguistic Ukrainization and Russophone resistance to it, see Martin 75-124. Martin argues that Ukrainization was (among adults) a failure grounded in the difficulty of changing the language used by people who were, themselves, opposed to such a change and that the transformation of the policy was primarily a concession to this difficulty.

Language,”one do-it-yourselfer took club theatres (and especially their group-leaders) to task for working in Russian, and insisting that “every amateur artist, following the example of the most senior comrade, the leader of the circle, must dutifully learn Ukrainian.”³⁸³

As the capital of Ukraine, Kharkiv also became its cultural center in the 1920s. The city’s plan was redesigned, and several major architectural projects were undertaken including the constructivist Derzhprom (Russian: Gosprom; English: State Industrial Administration) building (1925-1929), which was at the time the tallest building in the Soviet Union.³⁸⁴ Kharkiv became the center of Ukrainian literary life as modernist, futurist, and proletarianist groups set up their headquarters and publishing houses in the city, establishing what Mayhill Folwer, following the title of one of their periodicals, calls a “literary fair.”³⁸⁵ In 1926 avant-garde director Les Kurbas moved his Berezil' theatre to Kharkiv, adding the most prominent Ukrainian theatre to the modest collection of professional theatres operating in the new national capital.³⁸⁶

As in Moscow (and unlike some of the smaller towns and villages where troupes operated) Living Newspaper groups operating in Kharkiv offered workers one entertainment option among many. Nevertheless, it appears to have been a popular option as the city maintained several troupes, including “Steam-whistle” (“Gudok”) operating out of the Students’

³⁸³ Savchenko, I. M. “Vyvchaimo svoiu movu.” *Kul'trobitnyk* 1929 (11). 30.

³⁸⁴ On the reconstruction of Kharkiv, see Chrerkaova, E.T. “Idei i realizatsiia plana sotsialisticheskoi rekonstruktsii Khar'kova 1933-1935 godov.” *Sovetskoe g; radostroitel'stvo 1920-1930-x godov: Novye issledovaniia I materially*. Ed. Iu. L. Kosenkova. Moskva: URSS, 2009.129-155.

³⁸⁵ Fowler, Mayhill. “Beau Monde: State and Stage on Empire’s Edge, Russia and Soviet Ukraine, 1916-1941. Diss. Princeton U, 2011. 110-115. On the Ukrainian literary revival in Kharkiv, see Luckyi; Mudrak, Myroslava. *The New Generation and Artistic Modernism in the Ukraine*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986; and Shkandrij, Myroslav. *Marxists, Modernists, and the Nation: The Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920s*. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1991.

³⁸⁶ On Kurbas, see Fowler, *passim*; Kornienko, Nelli. *Les Kurbas: Repetytsiia maibutn'oho*. Kyiv: Lybid', 2007. Makaryk, Irena. *Shakespeare in the Undiscovered Bourne: Les Kurbas, Ukrainian Modernism, and Early Soviet Cultural Politics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004; Makaryk, Irena and Virlana Tkacz, eds. *Jubilant Experimentation: Modernism in Kyiv*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010. On other theatres in Kharkiv, see Paramonov, A and V Titar', eds. *Materialy k istorii Khar'kovskogo teatra, 1780-1934*. Khar'kov: Khar'kovskii chastnyi muzei gorodskoi usad'by, 2007.

Club and a troupe operating out of the Communalists' Club. While neither Living Newspaper registered with *Blue Blouse*, they both demonstrate the extent to which the magazine shaped do-it-yourself theatre beyond the limits of their official affiliates. "Steam-whistle" (Figure 53) was formed in 1925. Within a year they had performed 8 "issues" of their living newspaper. While they prided themselves on producing their own material rather than relying on scripts from Moscow, 10% of their repertoire in 1926 was still taken from *Blue Blouse*.³⁸⁷ Likewise, photographs from a performance of Living Newspaper of the Communalists' Club (Figure 54) shows their debt to *Blue Blouse*, as it features a *raek*, *chastuski*, and an "international overview:" all standard components of a Blue Blouse show.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁷ Murin. "Zhivgazeta 'Gudok'." *U stanka* 6 (1926). 18.

³⁸⁸ "Zhivye gazety rastut!" *U stanka* 24 (1925). 13.

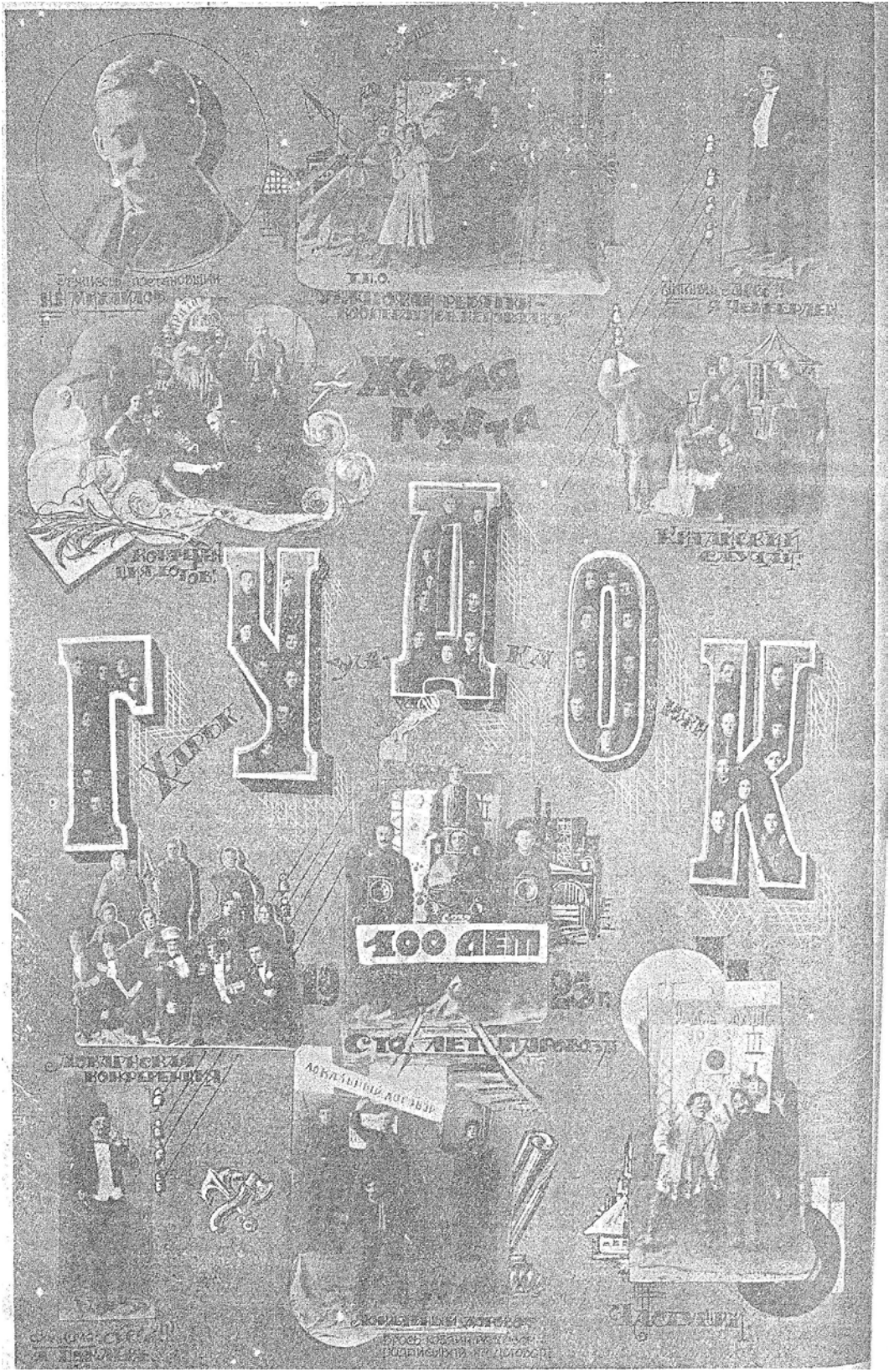


Figure 53. Poster for “Steam-whistle” Living Newspaper. *U stanka* 6 (1926), 18.



Figure 54. montage of photographs of a living newspaper performed by members of the Communalists' Club, featuring Ded Raeshnik (top left corner), performers singing *chashtushki* (bottom left corner), and an "International Review" (bottom right corner). *U stanka* 24 (1925), 13.

A survey of the city's club performances in the 1920s noted wryly that in 1925 and 1926 "every 'red corner' or minor worker's club had its own 'blue' or 'red' or 'green' or 'gray' or some other colored blouse," estimating that as many as 120 troupes performed in Kharkiv in 1925.³⁸⁹ The writer also noted that, due to a lack of leadership or quality material, many performed only once or twice and then disappeared—only 80 troupes remained by the end of 1926.³⁹⁰ Despite the relatively large number of living newspaper troupes that operated at one time or another in Kharkiv, only two officially registered with *Blue Blouse*, those associated with the Metalworkers' Club and the Polish Workers' Club. The city's Living Newspaper scene also

³⁸⁹ *Samodiial'nyi kliubnyi teatr*. Kharkiv: Radians'ka shkola, 1931. 55.

³⁹⁰ *Samodiial'nyi kliubnyi teatr*. Kharkiv: Radians'ka shkola, 1931. 54.

featured two prominent troupes, “U Stanka” (At the Workbenches) and “Veselyi Proletar” (The Jolly Proletarian), and a magazine, *Village Theatre*, which positioned themselves as alternatives to the hegemony of the Blouse Blouse in Kharkiv and the Ukrainian SSR.

5.2 “METALLIST:” BLUE BLOUSE AT THE METALWORKER’S CLUB

As Fowler notes, during the 1920s Theatre Square, situated in the center of the city, was “the cultural heart of Kharkiv.” Major publishing houses operated out of villas facing the square that faced Kurbas’ Berezil theatre. The Commisariat of Enlightenment was housed on one of the square’s side streets and Café Pok, situated behind the theatre, was where the city’s cultural and political elites rubbed elbows.³⁹¹ Two miles to the southeast, however, stood the heart of Kharkiv’s workers’ culture: the Metalworkers’ Club (Figure 55).



Figure 55. The Metalworkers’ Club in Kharkiv.

³⁹¹ Fowler 152-154.

The oldest and largest of Kharkiv’s workers’ clubs, the Metalworkers’ Club was one of the first built in the Russian Empire.³⁹² While a proposal to erect a “House of Workers” to promote “health, order, industriousness, and the proper carriage of oneself,” and to ward against alcoholism and extreme poverty was first approved by the city council in 1890, the building itself, designed by I. I. Zagoskin, was not completed until 1909.³⁹³ Theatrical performances were always a central function of the club, which was designed around a large proscenium auditorium (Figure 56). During the Revolution and Civil War, the building served as a hub for Bolshevik activity: “Revolutionary literature was read in the library, while revolutionary activity was debated in the basement.”³⁹⁴ In 1924 the club had over 1,000 members—by the end of the decade that number grew to nearly 3,000.³⁹⁵ In 1926 the status of the Metalworkers’ Club was cemented when it sponsored the construction of the city’s stadium on an adjacent field.

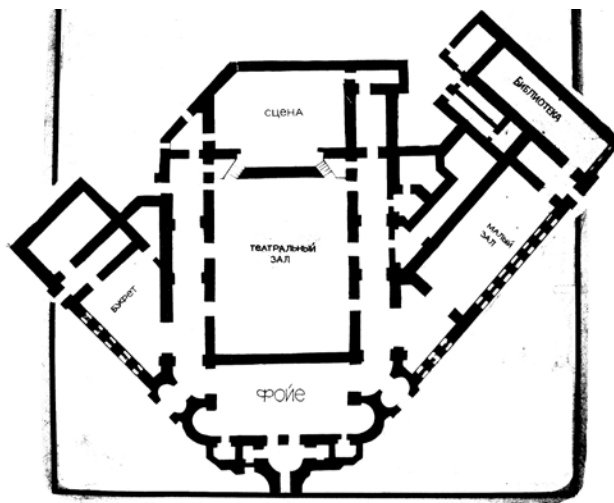


Figure 56. Floor plan of the Metalworkers’ Club in Kharkiv.

³⁹² It would remain the largest until 1932, when the massive constructivist Railworkers’ Club was completed.

³⁹³ *Proekt" ustava rabochago doma v" gorode Khar'kove*. Kharkiv: Tipo-Litografiia M. Gordona, 1890. 4. Kaskov, A. *Pervyi rabochii klub*. Moskva: Profizdat, 1961. Bystrichenko, A. V. and N. T. Krivomaz. “Dvoretz kul'tury ‘Metallist:’ gosudarstvenhogo predpriiatiia ‘zavod imeni Malysheva,’ 1909-1999. Kharkiv, 1999. Kalinina, Anna. “100 let dvortsu kul'tury ‘Metallist’”. Kharkiv: Zavod im, Malysheva, 1999.

³⁹⁴ Kalinina. n.p.

³⁹⁵ “Po rabochim klubam: rabochii dom metallistov.” *U stanka* 21-22 (1924). 14. DAKhO f.1010 op.1 s.1816 l.4.

In 1925 the club organized a living newspaper under the direction of a worker named Subbotin, adding to the club's theatrical repertoire, which already included three drama circles (one of which performed in Russian, two in Ukrainian).³⁹⁶ The living newspaper was made up of 24 members: 14 men and 10 women.³⁹⁷ By June 1926, the interest in membership of the Living Newspaper circle had grown to the point that a second group was added under the direction of an actor named Andreev (who was paid 75 rubles a month for his efforts).³⁹⁸ Andreev's group became an officially registered Blue Blouse troupe in March 1927, almost immediately after the registry of Blue Blouse troupes began.³⁹⁹

There are virtually no records of the repertoire of the "Metallist" Blue Blouse troupes although three photographs exist, which give some indication of their work. The first (Figure 57) depicts a sketch dedicated to the history of the Paris commune, which uses a relatively complex set featuring posters declaring "vive la commune!," a tribune above a platform painted with stylized skulls and bones, and a series of flags running from the edge of the proscenium into the auditorium. Notably there is no backdrop—the stairway at the back of the stage is left visible, tying this production to the modernist aesthetics of the Soviet Union's avant-garde professional theatres.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁶ DAKhO f.1010 op.1 s.1209 l.42. The Ukrainian Drama circles were led by Dmitrova and Grudyna, two members of the Ukrainian literary organization Hart (forge). Less, S. "Po rabochim klubam." *Novyi zritel'* 6 (1926) 12.

³⁹⁷ DAKhO f. 1010 op.1 s.923 l.14.

³⁹⁸ DAKhO f.1010 op.1 s.1209 l.42.

³⁹⁹ They were number 223. *Siniaia bluza* 53/54 (1927). 80.

⁴⁰⁰ *U Stanka* 6 (1926). 5. The photograph was not accompanied by a related article.



Figure 57. Performance of a sketch on the Paris Commune by the “Metallist” Blue Blouse troupe. *U stanka* 6 (1926), 5.

In the second photograph (Figure 58), which depicts an “industrial review,” this staircase has been incorporated into the action by the performers who line up on it, lending a dynamic quality to the assembly line that they appear to have created with their bodies. The photograph is outlined with graphics created by *Blue Blouse*’s designer, Anistasiia Akhtyrko, which makes it difficult to determine which parts of the background were a part of the performance and which were added when the photograph was published. It appears, however, that the set involved a pair of wheels, probably an idea borrowed from Liubov Popova’s set for the Meyerhold Theatre’s production of *The Magnanimous Cuckold*.⁴⁰¹

⁴⁰¹ *Siniaia bluza* 44 (1926). 10.

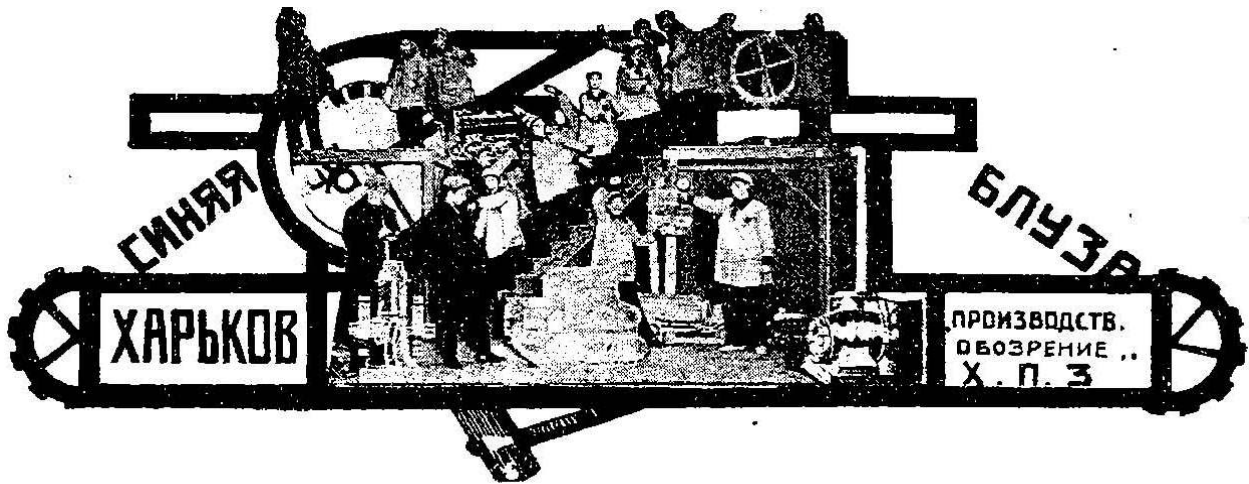


Figure 58. Performance by the “Metallist” Blue Blouse troupe. *Siniaia bluza* 44 (1926), 10.

The final photograph (Figure 59) is of a physical culture number, in which the performers have built a fairly complex pyramid that is a modification of the Blue Blouse’s standard star.⁴⁰² The performers costumes are striped sports shirts (*futbolki*), a popular choice among Blue Blouse troupes across the Soviet Union, but also one that might have spoken to the centrality of sports to the Metalworkers’ Club’s identity—the club’s stadium (which opened only a brief time before this photo was probably taken) was inaugurated with a massive physical culture performance enacted by 400 of the club’s members.⁴⁰³ The club’s Blue Blouse troupe also staged at least one “championship” sketch, a sub-genre of Blue Blouse work that involved several allegorical figures engaged in a series of boxing matches.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰² *Siniaia bluza* 71/72 (1927). 90.

⁴⁰³ On sportswear and Soviet modernism, see O’Mahony, Mike. *Sport in the USSR: Physical Culture-Visual Culture*. London: Reaktion, 2006. 26-28. On the opening day of Metallist stadium, see “Istoria stadiona ‘Metallist’.” www.metallist.ua/stadium_history.html.

⁴⁰⁴ DAKhO f.1010 op.1 s.1227 l.3. Andreev asked for 30 rubles to buy a pair of boxing gloves for the show. His request was denied.



Figure 59. “Metallist” Blue Blouse troupe. *Siniaia bluza* 71-72 (1927), 90.

In 1928 “Metallist” staged one of the Blue Blouse’s short operettas, “The moon from all sides” by D. Dolev and A. Irkutov⁴⁰⁵ The piece is a humorous treatment of the changes in courtship brought about by the revolution: Zina and Nikolai are two Komsomol members who are in love, but Nikolai has determined (after listening to a lecture on public health) that they should no longer kiss. Zina cites Aleksandra Kollontai in her reasoned criticism of his position but to no avail and he leaves in a fury. After his departure various boys come to court Zina: from the “right” come Sen'ka, a young hooligan, and Vas'ka, a dandy, both of whose interest in her is primarily carnal. From the “left” come Stepka, an ambitious young worker looking for a housewife to enable his career advancement by seeing to all of his domestic needs, and Mit'ka, a revolutionary thinker hoping to apply the principles of industrial organization to his love life in order to marry ten times a month. Zina, of course, rejects all of these unsuitable suitors, and

⁴⁰⁵ Shaidurova. “Mystets'ka robota po Kharkivs'kykh klubakh.” *Kul'trobitnyk* 2 (1928). 9. Dolev, D. and A. Irkutov. “Luna so vsekh storon.” *Siniaia Bluza* 67-68 (1927). 20-28.

Nikolai returns to apologize, with a small treatise from “an authoritative source” in hand. The two read the book together and, satisfied that their romantic activity poses no real public health risk, decide to move “from theory to practice.” This small sampling of the repertoire of the Blue Blouse troupe at the Metalworkers’ Club illustrates the extent to which Living Newspaper performances allowed peripheral, non-elite performers and audiences to participate in the broader modernist currents that shaped the cultural life of the early Soviet Union.

In 1928 the Metalworkers’ Club came under a significant amount of pressure from the Kharkiv Regional Council of Trade Unions (KhORPS) to Ukrainize its cultural work, the majority of which took place in Russian.⁴⁰⁶ Much of this work consisted of additions to the opportunities offered by the club—a Ukrainian studies circle was formed, for example. It seems likely, however, that some of the Ukrainization took the form of cuts to Russian programs: in a report on the Club’s activities made in April 1929 the living newspaper groups were no longer active, nor was the Russian drama circle.⁴⁰⁷

5.3 NIEBIESKA BLUZA: THE POLISH BLUE BLOUSE

The second registered Blue Blouse troupe in Kharkiv was organized at the Varinskii Polish Worker’s Club (Figures 60 and 61).⁴⁰⁸ The club was one of several organized to service the city’s national minority populations, existing alongside clubs for Latvian, German, and Jewish

⁴⁰⁶ See, for example, the directive “Po kul'trabyty.” DAKhO f.1010 op.1 s.1858 l.10.

⁴⁰⁷ DAKhO f.1010 op.1 s.1816 l.4; DAKhO f.1010 op.1 s.1819 l.59.

⁴⁰⁸ A small amount of material on the activities of the club is held in DAKhO f. r820, but none of it relates to the activity of the Polish Blue Blouse.

workers.⁴⁰⁹ The club was located in the center of the Kharkiv, in a space occupied by the city's pre-revolutionary Polish House. In a discussion of the club's work, one of its members complains that because the original club was founded by members of "the Polish chauvinist bourgeoisie" it was located too far from workers' neighborhoods for many to attend the club except on Saturdays.⁴¹⁰ Still, the city's 5,500 Poles held a major place in Bolshevik national strategy: on the one hand they sought to court sympathizers in neighboring countries by offering Soviet citizens of European nationality the same institutional rights as the titular nationalities of Soviet territories, while on the other hand these groups were subject to additional scrutiny as Soviet authorities feared they might be more loyal to their national homeland than the Soviet state.⁴¹¹



Figure 60. Polish Blue Blouse. *Siniaia bluz*a 69-70 (1927), 27.

⁴⁰⁹ Goncharova, Ol'ga Sergeiiivna. "Kul'turne zhittia natsional'nykh menshyn Kharkivshchyny 20-x pochatky 30-x pokiv XX stolittia." Talk at Korolenko State Scientific Library, Kharkiv. 28 November 2008. <http://korolenko.kharkov.com/kray/Goncharova.htm>

⁴¹⁰ Dal's'kyi. I. "Klub imeny tov. Varyns'koho." *Kul'trobitnyk* 17 (1928). 22-23.

⁴¹¹ Of the city's 5,500 Poles, 2,700 spoke Polish as their native language and 2,600 spoke Russian, while only 125 were native speakers of Ukrainian. *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naceleniia 1926 goda*. T. 12. 310. On the situation of Poles in Soviet Ukraine in the 1920s, see Martin 35-36. Dal's'kyi mentions in passing that 400 to 500 members of the club were purged from its roles in 1927. Most of them were probably found to sympathize with "bourgeois nationalism," which was politically unacceptable. 22.



Figure 61. Polish Blue Blouse. *Siniaia bluza* 69-70 (1927), 11.

The Blue Blouse troupe was formed early in 1926, although members of the club had been engaging in agitational performance prior to that: a photograph from 1925 shows members of the club performing a sketch at the Kharkiv Hippodrome in which workers are cutting apart a priest, a capitalist, and a nationalist with a giant pair of scissors (Figure 62). Even after aligning with the Blue Blouse movement, members of the Polish Blue Blouse maintained significant artistic independence, continuing to write half of their material themselves while translating the rest from issues of *Blue Blouse*.⁴¹² Led by a worker named Dyminskii, the troupe's 16 members performed exclusively in Polish, producing a new show every month and performing each show approximately three times. In addition to performances at their club, the Polish Blue Blouse toured the factories of Kharkiv and the Kharkiv region, staging work wherever there were a significant number of Polish workers. As a result, their audiences often included Ukrainian and Russian workers as well, although in a report on their activity, Dyminskii claims that their work

⁴¹² "Gde. Cho. Kak." *Siniaia bluza: komsomolskoe rozhdestvo* (1927), 47.

was well received in these heterogeneous audiences despite the language differences (one of the three photographs that accompanied the report depicts the “jazz band” that formed a part of the group’s performances—perhaps their success at crossing linguistic boundaries was due to an emphasis on music; see Figure 63). As a result of the troupe’s members’ relatively precarious status as Poles in the Soviet Union, their work tended to include a significant amount of “numbers dealing with the international political situation as a whole and the situation of Poland in particular.”⁴¹³

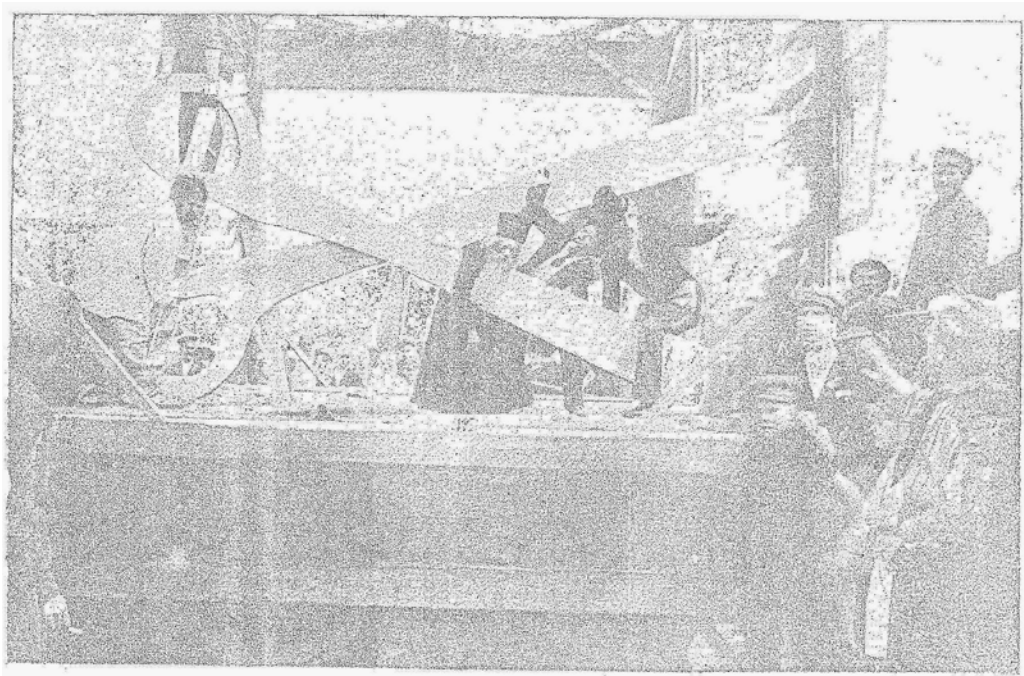


Figure 62. Agitational performance by members of the Varinskii Polish Workers’ Club at the Kharkiv hippodrome.

Rabochii klub 5 (1925), 31.

⁴¹³ “Gde. Cho. Kak.” *Siniaia bluza: komsomolskoe rozhdestvo* (1927), 47.



Figure 63. Polish Blue Blouse: “Jazz Band.” *Siniaia bluza* 69-70 (1927), 33.

5.4 VILLAGE THEATRE

In 1926, the publishing house “Soviet Village” began to publish *Village Theatre*, a Ukrainian-language magazine intended to serve do-it-yourself theatre troupes operating in the Ukrainian SSR. The magazine was edited by Iurii Smolych, a theatre critic who was a prominent figure in Kharkiv’s Ukrainian cultural scene and a member of the Free Academy of Proletarian Literature (VAPLITE), a circle of artists committed to creating a culture that was, in Fowler’s words,

“Soviet and Ukrainian.”⁴¹⁴ In the first issue, Smolych lays out an argument for the importance of do-it-yourself performance to Soviet Ukrainian culture:

It becomes clear at once how difficult it will be to entirely satisfy the demand for [a higher] cultural level of [the villages in] our country, not only now but for several more years. In order to provide leadership to village artistic circles we would need a whole army of political-enlightenment workers.... As a result of the fact that sending so many specialists to the village is not possible at the present time, we suggest another solution to the production of leaders for village artistic groups: find [them] in the groups themselves....⁴¹⁵

With the help of the material published in *Village Theatre*, he hoped, Ukrainians on the Ukrainian periphery would themselves be able to meet their own cultural demands.

The magazine published longer plays suitable for amateur performance as well as material for inclusion in Living Newspapers, posing as an alternative center for Ukrainian do-it-yourself theatre to the Soviet Union-wide *Blue Blouse*. This material was not only already in Ukrainian, it was often directly tailored to the specific ideological or political demands of the Ukrainian situation. In one sketch, “Vanguard” by Skliarenko, a Red Army soldier is confronted by representatives of the other powers who had vied for control of Ukraine during the civil war: a follower of Ukrainian nationalist Semen Petliura, a Cossack, and a White soldier, chasing each away in turn. When the Petliurist asks him, “Have you forgotten your Motherland?” the Red Soldier replies, “To us all lords are the same./ Whether they be Russian or Pole—/Or Ukrainian,/

⁴¹⁴ Fowler, 114. Smolych was a protégé of the nationalist communist Vasyl' Blakytnyi, the theatre critic for *Nove Mystetstvo* (*New Art*), and the Theatre Inspector for the Ukrainian Commissariat of Enlightenment. On his role in Ukrainian culture during the 1920s see Luckyj, Shkandrij, and Fowler.

⁴¹⁵ “Zavdannia nashogo zhurnaly.” *Sil's'kyi teatr* 1 (1926), 1.

to us they are alike. The rich are the same everywhere—/and the same everywhere are the poor!”⁴¹⁶

Unlike several of the other periodicals publishing Living Newspaper material (*Zh.T.G.*, for example) *Village Theatre* did not express hostility towards *Blue Blouse*. Rather, they encouraged using work produced in Moscow when it suited local, national needs (a position similar to that held by the Blue Blouse organizers, themselves) while maintaining that, as a whole, *Village theatre* was better suited to meet those needs. In a long review of the material published in the first 41 issues of *Blue Blouse*, for example, one of *Village Theatre*'s authors detailed what he considers useful to rural audiences. Blue Blouse's coverage of international politics, he argued, might be very valuable to village spectators, but it demanded too much knowledge ahead of time: "For a spectator who reads a newspaper everyday and who is familiar with the details of every international agreement, it would be understandable and interesting to watch... but for a spectator who reads newspapers a little, it would not be understood or productive." Similarly "Among the material in *Blue Blouse*, there is too little of interest to the village, written on specifically village themes;" and many of the texts that were—"Electrification" or "The Championship of the Cooperatives"—were written in a Russian rural idiom that would be difficult to translate. In contrast, the aspects of the Blue Blouse's adaptation of variety theatre and *estrada*, were well suited to village performance, because of their low technical demands and he suggested that a number of songs, *raeks*, and monologues, including "the anti-religious *raek*," the "*Raek* on Kulaks," and "Conversation with Comrade Rakovsky," might be suitable for Soviet Ukrainian culture if they were translated into Ukrainian. He concluded that "the greatest service provided by *Blue Blouse* is that it publishes material on

⁴¹⁶ Skliarenko. "Peredova." *Sil's'kyi teatr* 7. (1926) 24-26, 26.

contemporary events. We need to produce more of this—especially here, in the Ukrainian language. But we should also utilize the material in *Blue Blouse*.”⁴¹⁷

Until it closed in 1930, *Village Theatre* continued to pursue this dual tactic of producing its own material while remaining cautiously though favorably disposed towards the *Blue Blouse*—one of their early issues even included a translation of a *raek* published in *Blue Blouse*.⁴¹⁸ In their discussions of the *Blue Blouse*, however, it remains clear that *Village theatre*—and not *Blue Blouse*—should be the central resource for Ukrainian do-it-yourself theatres. As their editors explained in a response to a letter from a troupe that abandoned *Blue Blouse*, finding it too difficult constantly to translate the material: while “Material from *Blue Blouse* should be used, although adapted to the local language when possible.... Every village drama circle must work in the language closest to the masses—in this case Ukrainian. That is why the artistic material published in our journal should be used.”⁴¹⁹ Ukrainian do-it-yourself circles should rely on the material produced by a Ukrainian magazine.

5.5 AT THE WORKBENCH: THE LIVING NEWSPAPER OF THE KHORPS

In 1924, shortly after the MGSPS began to sponsor the first Moscow *Blue Blouse* troupes, its Kharkiv equivalent, the KhORPS, formed its own official central living newspaper, “At the Workbench” (“U stanka”) from some of the best performers at the city’s clubs (Figures 64 and

⁴¹⁷ Dorosh, Siryi. “‘Sinia Bluza’ (Ohliad 1-4 zbirnikiv).” *Sil's'kyi teatr* 8 (1926), 36.

⁴¹⁸ Sharudnyi “Dobryi khaziain I krai, a ne kurkul' I hlytai.” *Sil's'kyi teatr* 7 (1926). 28. “Khozaiaistvennost'—khoroshee kachestvo, otniud ne kulachestvo.” *Siniaia bluza* 27-28 (1926). 84-85.

⁴¹⁹ “Iak bulo i iak e.” *Sil's'kyi teatr* 7 (1927). 40.

65).⁴²⁰ From the moment of its founding, “At the Workbench” was conceived of as a local competitor to the Blue Blouse. In an article on their first performance, which also served as an early manifesto, the group’s director, L. Fonarev, presented “At the Workbench” as a welcome contrast to the Moscow troupe, extolling the locals for their superior commitment to do-it-yourselfness and proletarian forms:

The difference between the two groups is that Blue Blouse is performed by professional actors, while we stage our living newspapers on the strength of club drama circles. Further, we have firmly decided, once and for all, to reject the “cabaret-ness,” which is the greatest shortcoming of the Blue Blouse. Not one shabby, vulgar, operetta-ish, or *estrada* melody in our songs!⁴²¹

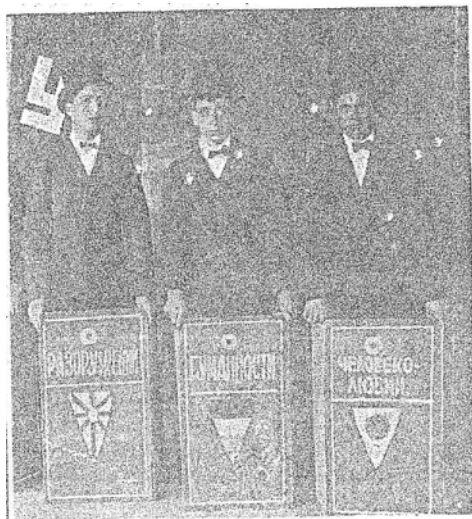


Figure 64. “At the Workbench” performing “International Review.” *U stanka* 9 (1926) 18.

⁴²⁰ *U stanka* was the title of the KhORPS’s weekly magazine.

⁴²¹ L. Fonarev. “Zhivaia gazeta ‘u stanka’.” *U stanka* 3 (1924). 14. Their insistence on the non-professional status of their performers may have been an overstatement. Aleksandr Shurov, one of their members who went on to become a famous variety theatre performer graduated from the Kharkiv Musical-Dramatic Technicum in 1925, indicating that he was receiving professional training for the duration of his work with the troupe. Dmitiriev, Iurii. “Shurov i Rykunin.” *Estrada Rossii XX vek: Entsiklopediia*. Moskva: Olma-Press, 2004. 754.

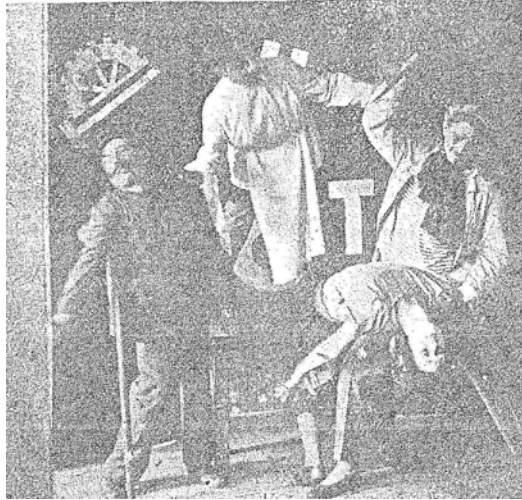


Figure 65. “At the Workbench” performing “Social Welfare *feuilleton*.” *U stanka* 9 (1926) 18.

Despite the stringent tone with which “At the Workbench” proclaimed its superiority to the Blue Blouse, their first presentation (which took place in Russian) was almost indistinguishable from a blue blouse performance. It began with an entry parade titled “From the editors,” which announced the “goals and tasks of a living newspaper.” This was followed by a sketch, “Hands off China” (*Blue Blouse* published a sketch with the same title—a popular slogan—in issue 4) and “Polit-radio” an international overview.⁴²² The show concluded with a *raek* on the theme of industrialization and several *chastushki*.⁴²³ “At the Workbench”’s initial rejection of the Blue Blouse was a way of proclaiming local independence rather than a measure of real differences.

As the KhORPS’s central living newspaper, “At the Workbench” toured all of the city’s clubs, functioning both as an evening’s entertainment and an example for living newspapers sponsored by the individual clubs to follow. Despite the fact that they were intended to operate at a higher level than average do-it-yourself troupes, their first show received mixed reviews from club audiences. The reviewer from the club on 7th Tabachnyi Lane found “many

⁴²² “Ruki proch’ ot Kitaia!” *Siniaia bluza* 4 (1924). 4-10.

⁴²³ L. Fonarev. “Zhivaia gazeta ‘u stanka’.” *U stanka* 3 (1924). 14.

shortcomings in relationship to composition,” criticizing the *raek* for a lack of connection to local themes and the *chastushki* for focusing on club issues that were “uninteresting to the masses.” They fared slightly better at the Builders’ Club, whose 300 spectators felt the show was “extremely successful” despite a few “minor defects that will probably be eliminated in the process of future work.” The correspondent from the Kalinin Club felt that “The first and second numbers were good. The rest—a little boring. The whole newspaper needs to be ‘living.’” Nevertheless, he foresaw that “the living newspaper ‘At the Workbench’ should become valuable for all workers’ clubs.”⁴²⁴

The antipathy voiced towards Blue Blouse by the representatives of “At the Workbench” early in their existence was dissipated in April 1925, when the touring Moscow Blue Blouse troupe reached Kharkiv. The Blue Blouse and “U stanka” staged a “*smychka*” (union) sharing the billing during the touring troupe’s performance at the Antropov Club.⁴²⁵ Some of the criticism directed at the Blue Blouse may have been quieted once reviewers and performers were able to see it themselves: a glowing review (which carefully noted that the Blue Blouse, unlike “At the Workbench” was made of professional actors) of the performance was published in *U stanka*:

First of all, an amazing impression is given by the scripts, which are constructed with literary strength and artistically carried out, while at the same time are ideologically flawless. It was the same with the performers. Such distinct, harmonious mastery can only be seen rarely.... The Blue Blouse already have a

⁴²⁴ “Chto govoriat o zhivoi gazette?” *U stanka* 3 (1924), 14.

⁴²⁵ “Smychka” was the term used to describe the desired union between workers and peasants, and therefore takes on a very serious tone when describing the bridging of differences between do-it-yourself theatre troupes.

great deal of experience with this new form of artistic agitpropaganda. Our workers' clubs must, as a first order of business, use this experience.⁴²⁶

The Blue Blouse were no stingier with their praise for the local troupe, proclaiming that “At the Workbench” was better than even the best Moscow living newspapers. While the members of “At the Workbench” maintained that the performance of living newspapers by professional actors was “incorrect”, “the *smychka* of the two living newspapers—from Moscow and Kharkiv—was quite warm.”⁴²⁷

“At the Workbench” continued to maintain a high profile in Kharkiv and the surrounding region, adding a second troupe in 1926 to help satisfy the demand for its work.⁴²⁸ Under the leadership of a new director, Boris Garemov, the theatre began to expand its repertoire adding longer pieces originally performed at the Theatre of Satire in Moscow, a development that mirrored the shift in the repertoire of the Moscow Blue Blouse.⁴²⁹ Like the Moscow Blue Blouse, their performances often incited audience members to form their own living newspapers and by the end of 1926 there were 34 collectives operating in Kharkiv “on the ‘At the Workbench’ model.”⁴³⁰ The troupe, made up primarily of Russophone workers drawn from the city’s clubs, fared poorly under the pressures of linguistic Ukrianization, however. They began performing parts of their shows, sometimes even a full sketch, in Ukrainian, but as one reviewer put it: “This is not Ukrainization, but a little bit of Ukrainian makeup on their face.”⁴³¹ The KhORPS, possibly in response to this failing began to sponsor, together with the All-Ukrainian

⁴²⁶ S.H. “‘Siniaia Bluza’ MGSPS: iz vpechetlenii.” *U stanka* 7 (1925). 8.

⁴²⁷ “Vecher smychki zhivikh gazet.” *U stanka* 7 (1925). 9.

⁴²⁸ A. “Po zhivym gazetam.” *Rabochii klub* 1 (1926). 89.

⁴²⁹ A number of the frequent contributors to *Blue Blouse* including Vladimir Mass, Mikhail Vol'pin, and Viktor Tipot also wrote for the Moscow Theatre of Satire. Ard. “Khudozhestvennaia rabota teatral'nye masterskie ‘u stanka’ (Khar'kov).” *Rabochii klub* 11 (1926). 67-68.

⁴³⁰ Stanislavskii, K. “K trekhletnomy iubeleiu teatral'noi masterskoi ‘u stanka’.” *Kul'trabotnik* 20 (1927). 37. DAKhO f.1010 op.1 d.665 l.31ob.

⁴³¹ Ard. “Po zhivym gazetam.” *Rabochii klub* 4 (1926). 82-83.

Council of Trade Unions (VURPS), another—unmistakably Ukrainian—variety theatre troupe, The Jolly Proletarian (Veselyi proletar) at the end of 1926, and shortly after the celebration of the troupe’s third anniversary in late 1927 “At the Workbench” disbanded.⁴³²

5.6 THE JOLLY PROLETARIAN

The Jolly Proletarian was a variety theatre founded in 1926 by Ianuarii Bortnyk, a student of Les Kurbas and a former director at his Berezil' Theatre, immediately lending it credibility as a “Ukrainian” alternative to the Russian- (or Polish-, or Latvian-, or Jewish-)language theatre that dominated the stages of Kharkiv’s clubs. A review of their first performance, which took place in 1927 at the 3rd International Club enthusiastically announced that The Jolly Proletarian “had a right to expect great success in the workers’ auditorium, especially because there is so little Ukrainian theatre of this variety.”⁴³³ The collective’s work mixed Living Newspaper with longer form satirical work, while its aesthetics (fulfilled by artist V. Grypak) were grounded in Berezil’s signature mixture of constructivism and expressionism.⁴³⁴ The content of their shows was also developed with an eye towards Ukrainian culture: their first production featured a parody of Gogol’s Cossack epic *Taras Bulba* (Figure 66).⁴³⁵

⁴³² Ard. “Klubnaia stsena i teatr: trekhletnyi iubilei zhivoi gazety KhOSPS ‘U stanka’.” *Kul'trabotnik* 24 (1927). 41-42.

⁴³³ A. “Veselyi proletar.” *Kul'trabotnik* 7 (1927). 41.

⁴³⁴ “‘Prihody’ v teatri ‘Veselyi proletar’.” *Nove Mystetstvo* 6 (1928). 9.

⁴³⁵ *Kul'trabotnik* 7 (1927). 42-43. On the visual aesthetics of the Berezil' Theatre, see Mudrak, Myroslava. “Vadym Meller, Les Kurbas, and the Ukrainian Theatrical Avant-Garde.” *Russian History/ Historie Russe* 8 (1981). 199-218.

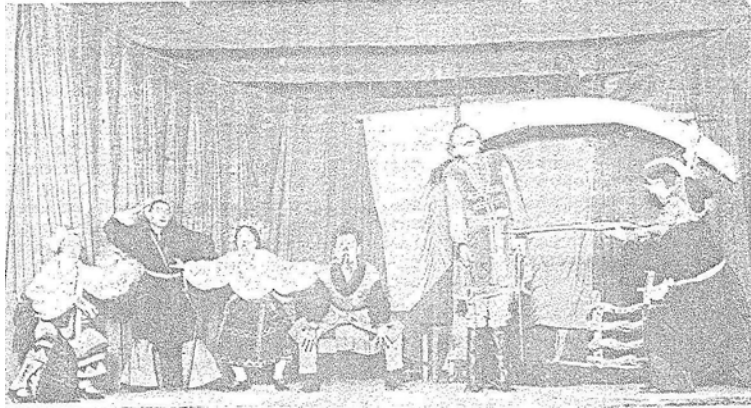


Figure 66. The Jolly Proletarian performing “Taras Bulba.” *Kul'trabotnik* 7 (1927), 42.

The Jolly Proletarian quickly expanded its work beyond the confines of Kharkiv, touring Ukrainian workers' clubs in the summer of 1927. This tour established the troupe as a force in Ukrainian variety theatres as it formed affiliate troupes in a variety of cities, including Kyiv, Odessa, Dnepropetrovsk, Zaporozh'e, and the Donbas, all of whom relied upon the Kharkiv Jolly Proletarian's repertoire.⁴³⁶ The theatre had major success on the stages of Ukrainian clubs, performing up to 40 times in a town.⁴³⁷ By the end of 1928 they were the dominant fixture in discussions of variety theatre in Ukrainian clubs as a result of their mixture of skill and national character—their ability to fulfill “their special task: to create a new theatrical form—variety theater—on the Ukrainian stage.”⁴³⁸

As the Blue Blouse movement faced major organizational challenges in Moscow, then, the Jolly Proletarian offered clubs in Ukraine a national alternative to the Blue Blouse, staging topical variety theatre shows in a national idiom that was heavily favored by the Ukrainian state and its affiliates at the end of the 1920s. The Jolly Proletarian was selected to represent Kharkiv at the 1930 Theatrical Olympiad in Moscow and remained productive until 1932 when it was

⁴³⁶ Halons'ka, Oksana. “Kharkivs'kyi teatr ‘Veselyi proletar’ na vsesoiuznii olimpiadi mystetsv u Moskvi.” *Kul'tura Ukrainy* 26 (2009). 177-186. 178.

⁴³⁷ Lein, A. “Teatr ‘Veselyi proletar’.” *Sil's'kyi teatr* 6 (1928). 33-34.

⁴³⁸ Siryi, D. “Veselyi Proletar.” *Kul'trobitnyk* 23/24 (1928). 38.

closed at approximately the same time that the doors of the Blue Blouse theatre in Moscow were shut.⁴³⁹

5.7 CONCLUSION

The Blue Blouse movement played an important role in the production of worker's theatre in Kharkiv, enjoying successful tour stops in the Ukrainian capital as well as a large following of official affiliates and unofficial imitators. The activities of these troupes illustrate the theatrical negotiation of the emerging Soviet space with conditions specific to Kharkiv. Even troupes content to draw heavily from *Blue Blouse's* published repertoire had to negotiate the city's linguistic complexities, performing in Russian and Polish within a Ukrainian national space. The Polish Blue Blouse even took advantage of the forum offered by *Blue Blouse*, registering their participation in the statewide movement by sharing their achievements through correspondence with the magazine. Other artists, workers, and intellectuals sought to provide national alternatives to what they saw as a "Russian" organization, publishing magazines with Ukrainian-language living newspaper scripts and creating the Jolly Proletarian, a variety theatre that originated out of Berezhil, the Ukrainian national theatre, and which engaged more specifically with Ukrainian national culture. Not all of the challenges facing the hegemony of the Blue

⁴³⁹ Halons'ka. "Kharkivs'kyi teatr 'Veselyi proletar' na vsesoiuznii olimpiadi mystetstv u Moskvi," 185. Just as many of the artists affiliated with the Moscow Blue Blouse went on to work at the Moscow Operetta, following the closure of The Jolly Proletarian Bortnyk directed at the Kharkiv Operetta until his arrest in 1937. Halons'ka, Oksana. "Rezhiser Ianuarii Bortnyk ta shliakhy stanovlennia ukrains'koi muzychnoi komedii." *Naukovi zapysky Ternopil'koho natsional'noho pedahohichnoho universytetu im. V. Hnatiuka. Ser. Mystetstvoznavstvo*. 2 (2011). 154-158. At the Theatrical Olympiad in Moscow, One reviewer compared The Jolly Proletarian favorably to the Blue Blouse. Botunova, Halina. "Kharkivs'kyi teatr 'Veselyi proletar' (1927-1931 rr.): uroki istorii." *Naukovyi visnyk Kyivs'koho natsional'noho universytetu teatru, kino, i telebachennia imeni I.K. Karpenka-karoho* 6 (2006).65-90; 81.

Blouse organization in Kharkiv were national in nature, however. While the movement as a whole was engaged in the Soviet project of making every center a periphery and every periphery a center by spreading theatrical production and performance to remote villages, the Kharkiv troupe “At the Workbench” raised objections to it on the grounds that such a project could not be carried out by professional artists from Moscow. Positioning themselves as a counterweight to the Moscow troupes, “At the Workbench” furthered this process of de-centering, training local troupes and touring regionally. Despite their objections, however, these local groups were participants in the larger Blue Blouse project, translating their texts, imitating their performance style, or adapting it to the needs of Ukrainian nationalism; just as surely as the registered groups at the Metalworkers’ Club or the Polish Workers’ club they were helping do-it-yourself theatre spread across the Soviet state.

6.0 CONCLUSION: THE BLUE BLOUSE DISPLACED

Gurevich, Boris Semenovich (Iuzhanin)
Charge: P-SH (suspicion of spying)
Term: 3 years
Date of Birth: 1900
Profession: Blue Blousenik
—Registration form, Kolyma Concentration Camp⁴⁴⁰

By the beginning of 1928 Boris Iuzahnin and the Blue Blouse organizers in Moscow had firmly established themselves as the center of do-it-yourself agit-prop theatre, not just in the Soviet Union, but world-wide. The Blue Blouse movement had already officially registered more than four hundred troupes. Their scripts were being performed at thousands of workers clubs. They had successfully completed tours of Germany and Latvia, where their work was admired by established theatre workers and critics and was imitated by hundreds of worker's theatre troupes. By the end of that year, however, this position had been largely lost. Their magazine was closed and with this act, they lost much of their access to—and control over—the movement that they had helped to organize.

In his analysis of the phenomenology of place, *Getting Back into Place*, Edward Casey argues that the experience of “implacement” is essential to a sense of well being, providing both an ability to orient oneself within one's surroundings, and a connection between the body and the cultural landscape within which it is located. But, he cautions that “displacement threatens

⁴⁴⁰ Quoted in Shalamov 250.

emplacement at every turn.”⁴⁴¹ Discussing the removal of the Dineh (Navajo) Indians from their homeland in northeastern Arizona by the Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act of 1974, Casey argues that their removal meant the loss of both the “particular places in which their lives were formerly at home” and “the still greater loss of an entire land... [that] the Navajo call... ‘the Great Self’.”⁴⁴² This displacement resulted in the loss of “two distinct but interrelated aspects [of place,] one of which is situated outside and around the individual self, while the other is internal to this self.”⁴⁴³ Casey makes clear that while the most striking examples of displacement are brought about by physical removal, the experience of displacement (and the alienation and disorientation that this brings) can be the result of more subtle factors as well, with results just as devastating.⁴⁴⁴

As a conclusion to the examination of the relationship between the Blue Blouse movement and the practices of space and place in the early Soviet Union I will explore three symptoms of the “place pathology” brought about by the displacement of the Blue Blouse from the center of the Living Newspaper movement. The first is the literal displacement of Boris Iuzhanin, the central figure of the movement, initially from the organization itself and then, following his arrest, from Moscow. The second symptom is Nikolai L'vov's study of the effects of the closing of the Blue Blouse's magazine on provincial Living Newspapers, which led him to call for a return of the organization to its proper place within Soviet theatrical discourse. Finally, I will discuss the program of the 1933 Olympiad of Autonomous Art held in Moscow, which gathered together Blue Blouse troupes from around the world, but too late to for them see any trace of the organization that had inspired them in the first place.

⁴⁴¹ Casey 34.

⁴⁴² Casey 35-36.

⁴⁴³ Casey 35.

⁴⁴⁴ Casey 38.

6.1 BORIS IUZHANIN: “PROFESSION: BLUE BLOUSENIK”

Boris Iuzhanin was genuinely and fanatically dedicated to the ideals and of the Blue Blouse movement, tirelessly supporting the cause while paying little attention to his personal well being. As Elizaveta Uvarova notes, he “was fantastically taken by the idea of agitation theatre and truly believed that in art, only the Blue Blouse ‘promotes socialist construction’ as ‘the powerful agitational weapon of the vanguard of the working class.’”⁴⁴⁵



Figure 67. Iuzhanin (4th from left) performing in a 1924 Blue Blouse sketch called “The Championship of Old and New Holidays.” *Siniia bluza* 71-72 (1928), 21.

After a half decade as a ubiquitous presence in nearly all spheres of Blue Blouse activity, serving variously as a performer, author, editor, advocate, and tour manager, at the end of 1929 his name suddenly and without warning disappeared from the masthead of the magazine *Small Forms of Club Spectacle*, which he edited after the closure of *Blue Blouse*. Issue number eleven,

⁴⁴⁵ Uvarova, *Russkaia Sovetskaia estrada 1917-1929* 95-96. This view is supported by a number of other recollections including Varlam Shalamov’s, who remembered him as “the poet-fanatic of the Blue Blouse” suggesting that for Iuzhanin, the Living Newspaper was not just the form he worked in but his “life philosophy;” and Viktor Ardov’s, who recalled with fondness Iuzhanin’s distaste for all forms of theatre beyond the living newspaper (Shalamov, 250, 253; Ardov, Viktor and M. Garkavi. “Vsegda boevye, aktivnye!” *Sovetskaia estrada i tsirk*. May 1964, 9-11; Ardov, Viktor “Polveka spustia” Manuscript RGALI f. 1822 op. 1 d. 153 ll. 11-17 [1973]).

which was largely dedicated to skits commemorating the 12th anniversary of the October Revolution and the implementation of the first Five Year Plan, would be his final appearance as an official organizer of the Blue Blouse.⁴⁴⁶ Issue number twelve makes no mention of any change in the composition of the editorial board. The only indication that something was different was the fact that on the final page of the magazine *Liakhovets* was now listed as the editor.⁴⁴⁷

Following this disappearance, Iuzhanin's name appears one more time in the Blue Blouse archive. At the end of February 1930, Iuzhanin's second in command, Viktor Mrozovskii, wrote a letter to a group of Moscow Blue Blouseniks who had spent several months touring the Russian Far East in the service of the Army.

Dear Comrades— “Concertniks” of the Blue Blouse squad of the ODVA.

Many days have passed since you departed from Moscow—a lot has changed in our theatre.

First of all, the ranks have changed in the directorship. On the 16th of December of the past year, B. Iuzhanin was removed from the staff of the theatre. For a long time nobody heard anything further of him. Then it was explained, that he was tried in connection with a certain investigation of the activities of the theatre and is under arrest [*nakhodilsia v zakliuchenii*].

This report is still chilling in its brevity. No detail is offered. The final sentence, with its passive construction, refrains from assigning responsibility for Iuzhanin's situation.

⁴⁴⁶ *Malye formy klubnogo zrelishcha* 11 (1929). 64.

⁴⁴⁷ *Malye formy klubnogo zrelishcha* 12 (1929). 64.

The letter goes on to tell of a variety of other organizational changes in a deliberate, even tone filled with passive and impersonal constructions.⁴⁴⁸ He closes his relatively long account of the rapid decline of the theatre's fortune with an encouraging (or perhaps desperate) call for the touring troupe to "demonstrate in practice that our theatre is not only in name, but in fact powerful [*udarnim*]," signing off with the movement's traditional farewell: "with Blue Blouse greetings [*s sinebluznym privetom*]." ⁴⁴⁹ Mrozovskii's deliberately brief account of Iuzhanin's removal and arrest was the only mention of it in Blue Blouse materials; no editorials in *Small Forms of Club Spectacle* condemned him or agitated for his return. He had vanished from the movement without a trace.⁴⁵⁰

While under arrest, though, Iuzhanin became an acquaintance of the well-known chronicler of Gulag life, Varlam Shalamov, who, in 1967, wrote a brief account of their time together.⁴⁵¹ Shalamov describes a fall day at the camp in Kolyma on the Chukhotka peninsula when he was registering new arrivals to the camp and was struck by the strangeness of a response in one of the blanks on the list of prisoners. Someone had listed "Blue Blousenik" as his profession: "What kind of profession is that? Not a locksmith, not an accountant, not a cultural worker, but a 'Blue Blousenik'." It was evident that with this answer to a jailhouse question on the camp form, the arrested wanted to communicate something that was important to

⁴⁴⁸ Voskresenskii was named the temporary director of the theatre, the troupe lost 28 performers following a review of their qualifications, and the theatre's Leningrad filial was closed, for example.

⁴⁴⁹ GTsTM f. 627 op. 1 d. 1. 1.82, 82 ob.

⁴⁵⁰ It is worth noting that Iuzhanin's arrest and deportation occurred considerably earlier than those of other major figures of the Soviet theatre of the 1920s. Les Kurbas, Nikolai Erdman, and Vladimir Mass were arrested in 1933; Mikhail Vol'pin and Mykola Kulish in 1934; Sergei Tretyakov in 1937; and Vsevolod Meyerhold in 1939. This may have saved his life, as he (along with Erdman and Mass) had been released before the execution of artists had become a common corollary of arrest.

⁴⁵¹ Shalamov was an anti-Stalinist activist in Moscow in the late 1920s who participated in the Trotskyist march on the tenth anniversary of the Revolution. He was arrested in 1929 for in a raid on an underground printing house publishing a pamphlet called "Lenin's Testimony" and spent the next twenty-five years in and out of the Soviet prison camp system. He wrote extensively about his experience in the GULAG and is best known for his collection *Kolyma Tales* (published in the West in 1972). Shalamov's archive maintains an excellent website, which includes his complete works at www.shalamov.ru.

himself.”⁴⁵² His curiosity piqued, Shalamov read the form in detail. According to his recollection it read “Gurevich, Boris Semenovich (Iuzhanin), Charge: p-sh (abbreviation, suspicion of spying [*podozrenie v shpionazh*]), term: three years—unthinkable for that charge even at that time! —date of birth: 1900 (a child of the century), profession: blue blousenik.”⁴⁵³

Shalamov took an interest in Iuzhanin, who had been beaten and robbed by criminals on the long train ride to the camp, and eventually learned the circumstances of his arrest: Iuzhanin, because of his absolute commitment to the Blue Blouse, was driven to something like despair by the disputes with the trade unions, the weakening of the movement, and the closing of the magazines. As Iurii Dmitriev notes, Iuzhanin “was an independent man, accustomed to fully leading and he tired of receiving admonishment, often about details. He began to respond to them sharply, even sometimes unduly sharply.”⁴⁵⁴ Remembering the reception that the theatre had received on their tour of Germany, where he won the admiration of figures like Erwin Piscator, Bertolt Brecht, critic Alfred Kerr, and the chairman of the German section of International Workers Relief, he decided to flee the country. “The Child! He fled unsuccessfully. He handed all of his money to some sailor in Batum', and the sailor took him to the OGPU. Iuzhanin sat in prison a long time” before being transferred to the camps.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵² Shalamov 249

⁴⁵³ Shalamov 250. Shalamov mistakes Iuzhanin’s date of birth (actually 1896). While this may, to a degree, call into question the accuracy of his recollection, it is the only available document on Iuzhanin’s time in prison: the archive at Memorial, which hold records for thousands of gulag prisoners, for example, has no file on Iuzhanin.

⁴⁵⁴ Dmitriev 62.

⁴⁵⁵ Shalamov 254.



Figure 68. Iuzhanin (left) posing with the German Secretary of International Workers Relief in Berlin. *Sinaia bluza* 76 (1928), 51.

Shortly after his arrival at Kolyma, Iuzhanin was transferred to one of the camps near the Vishera river, where he became the leader of a Blue Blouse troupe made up of prisoners, to which Shalamov contributed a few sketches and couplets. Iuzhanin also worked as the editor of *New Vishera*, the camp's newspaper.⁴⁵⁶ Iuzhanin was released in 1931 and, still exiled from Moscow, settled in Aleksandrov, eventually returning to journalism--the profession for which he had been trained--working as a radio announcer. He died in 1962, shortly before a series of articles were published in honor of the fortieth anniversary of the Blue Blouse, sparking a gradual renewal of interest in the movement.

⁴⁵⁶ Shalamov 254. Shalamov claims that an issue of this paper is in the collection of the Lenin Russian State Library. I was, however, unable to locate it.

6.2 NIKOLAI L'VOV'S INVESTIGATION OF THE "LIVING NEWSPAPER CRISIS"

Nikolai L'vov (1893-1981) was a director, critic, and theatre historian who had been peripherally involved with the Blue Blouse movement. During the early 1920s he was a prominent theatre activist advocating and enabling Do-It-Yourself theatre, and in 1924 he was hired by the Blue Blouse to direct one of their troupes performing in the beerhalls of Moscow.⁴⁵⁷ He served as a critic for the magazine *New Spectator* in the mid-1920s, contributing articles and reviews of performances at the workers' clubs of Moscow.

In 1929 L'vov, now an employee of Glavpolitprosvet (The Central Committee for Political Enlightenment), noted that a "crisis" had enveloped the Living Newspaper movement.⁴⁵⁸ He received funding from his employer for an investigation into the situation of Living Newspaper troupes with a special emphasis on discovering the causes of the crisis and illuminating the condition of troupes in the provinces.⁴⁵⁹ Formulating a methodology appropriate to the task of surveying such a massive movement was a daunting issue, and in the end, L'vov decided to use the Blue Blouse's registry as his sample.⁴⁶⁰ He mailed a questionnaire to each of the 551 groups registered in *Blue Blouse* asking for detailed information on their recent activity:

⁴⁵⁷ On his theatrical activism, see Mally, *Revolutionary Acts* 20. On his work as a director of a Blue Blouse troupe, see GTsTM f. 150 op. 1 ed. khr. 11 *passim*.

⁴⁵⁸ GTsTM f. 150. op.1 ed. khr. 47 dok. 2.

⁴⁵⁹ See L'vov's plan for the investigation: GTsTM f.150 op.1 ed. khr. 47 dok. 1.

⁴⁶⁰ For a discussion of L'vov's methodology, as well as the issues that his selective preservation of materials pose for contemporary researchers, see Crane.

We direct to the workers of the club a request to communicate to us: whether the collective exists at the current time or whether the Living Newspaper in your club has ceased to exist.

If a Living Newspaper exists, please explain:

- 1) What changes in the work of the collective have occurred in the past year?
- 2) What textual material is used by the Living Newspaper (repertoire, material printed in collections or written by local authors in the club itself).
- 3) Is your audience satisfied with the work of the Living Newspaper?

If your Living Newspaper has ceased to exist, please explain:

- 1) When and why did the liquidation of the liquidation of the Living Newspaper occur?
- 2) Did the collective turn to other forms of work or collapse completely?
- 3) Which forms of spectacle do the audiences of your club want? ⁴⁶¹

Fewer than 10% of the recipients of L'vov's questionnaire (Only 54 of 551) actually responded to his request for information. He interpreted the low response rate as an indication of the severity of the crisis, assuming that non-response probably indicated the closure of the troupe, while noting that the widespread nature of the poor response rate was also the result of the lack of a central organizing force.⁴⁶²

⁴⁶¹ GTsTM f. 150 op.1 ed. xp.47 dok. 2.

⁴⁶² L'vov, Nikolai. "Na sinebluznom fronte." *Malye formy klubnogo zrelishcha* 8 (1929), 60-63; 60. While it seems reasonable to agree with L'vov's conclusions other factors contributing to the low rate of response might include a loss of prestige by the Blue Blouse, a lack of interest in living newspapers in general, or failures by club administrators to get the questionnaire to the correct person or respond in time.

L'vov summarized his findings in an article titled “On the Blue Blouse Front,” which was published in *Small Forms of Club Spectacle*, grounding his argument in extensive quotations from the responses that he did receive. L'vov argues, first and foremost, that the crisis in the Living Newspaper movement was not the result of a lack of interest among spectators: as one letter from Ufa put it, “workers wait for Living Newspaper performances like a pie from the oven.”⁴⁶³ Another letter from the Severo-Dvinsk region offered more detail:

Nearly four years of experience says that interest in Living Newspapers hasn't fallen one bit. Workers eagerly attend productions—not only free ones but ones with paid admission as well. It is our opinion that if Living Newspapers or variety theatre in the clubs is unconditionally supported, then Living Newspapers will not only outlive this crisis, but will quickly rise in quality.⁴⁶⁴

What workers were tired of, L'vov suggested, was outdated and “primitive” performances, a preference that compounded the repertory crisis brought on by the closure of *Blue Blouse*, about which many of the respondents complained. A letter from Vyselksi lamented “it is very bad that *Blue Blouse* stopped being published. We didn't need to find new forms of work--it was already on a new path, and the last issues of the journal were the best of all, but for some reason the journal stopped being published.”⁴⁶⁵ Some clubs, including the all-Union club in Merv, dealt with the magazine's closure by continuing to use material from old issues:

The Collective continues to be liked only thanks to the fact that we use material from old issues of *Blue Blouse* and local material. If the center gives us good scenarios or sends us material on everyday themes (even of an agitational

⁴⁶³ L'vov 60.

⁴⁶⁴ L'vov 60.

⁴⁶⁵ L'vov 60. The slightly rambling syntax of this translation is true to the original quote.

character), we will continue to live, because we are above all a newspaper. If this doesn't happen, then many living newspapers of the USSR will end up going under.⁴⁶⁶

Other groups, like the one at the Grishino palace of culture in the Donbas region, closed with the magazine: “After we received the final issue of *Blue Blouse*, with the farewell letter to Blue Blouseniks, the circle never got together again.”⁴⁶⁷

The existence of other magazines catering to Living Newspapers did nothing, L'vov claimed, to ease the script crisis. As the letter from Ranenburg plainly states, “The issues of *Zh.T.G* [*Zhivaia teatral'naia gazeta—Living Theatrical Newspaper*, the organ of the Perm' opposition within the Blue Blouse movement] from Perm' were not satisfactory is because of their primitivism and bad material.”⁴⁶⁸ L'vov argued that *Club Stage* had “no authority” among Living Newspaper groups, while *Small Forms of Club Spectacle* was “evidently not sufficiently well known in the provinces... as this publication was only mentioned in nine letters.”⁴⁶⁹ Similarly, producing material locally, rather than reworking published texts, was not a solution according to the letter from Kremenburg, as “such comrades, who can produce material locally, can be counted on one hand.”⁴⁷⁰

As bad as the crisis in material was, L'vov argued, the crisis in leadership brought on by the closure of *Blue Blouse* was worse. Without a central organization, it was impossible to chart the movement, as he understood only too well after his attempt to study it:

⁴⁶⁶ L'vov 61.

⁴⁶⁷ L'vov 61.

⁴⁶⁸ L'vov 62.

⁴⁶⁹ L'vov 62.

⁴⁷⁰ L'vov 62.

We have only a scanty idea of the contemporary composition of Living Newspapers at the local level. Three years ago in the person of the Moscow editors of *Blue Blouse*, we had a center, directly connected with local groups and maintaining a detailed understanding of Living Newspaper work in the provinces. At the present time, *Blue Blouse* has turned away from the role of the organizational center. And this source of information has collapsed.⁴⁷¹ Other organizations, including the magazine *Club Stage*, have not generated connections with local groups and have little understanding of local Living Newspaper work.⁴⁷²

Even more importantly, however, *Blue Blouse* and its Moscow office was,

an essential place, not only as a literary center, but as the organizational headquarters of the Blue Blouse movement. This headquarters gave energy to the collectives. Slogans situated in the magazine, photos from productions, the registry and roll call of collectives, all of this produced a general interest among Blue Blouseniks. The congresses of Blue Blouseniks also played a role, giving collectives the opportunity to understand themselves not only as isolated craftsmen engaged in artistic labor, but as a mass movement on the front lines of a new culture.⁴⁷³

The Closure of the magazine meant the loss of the movement's place within the discursive space of the Soviet Union. Without it the Blue Blouse movement was displaced--as it turns out

⁴⁷¹ In his draft of this article L'vov phrases this more accusingly, saying "This source of information has been liquidated." GTsTM f. 150 op. 1 ed. khr. 47 dok. 7 l. 1.

⁴⁷² L'vov 60.

⁴⁷³ L'vov 63.

irrevocably—and fell into a crisis that resulted in the disbanding of thousands of troupes and a profound shift in the nature of the work performed by others.

6.3 THE OLYMPIAD OF DO-IT-YOURSELF THEATRE

The displacement generated by the loss of this center was felt internationally as well. By the end of the 1920s, the Blue Blouse movement had gained significant international attention in left-leaning cultural circles, largely as a result of their tour of Germany, positive reports from visitors to Moscow, and a fairly active correspondence between the organizers of the Blue Blouse and leftist cultural groups in the west.⁴⁷⁴ This attention led to the formation of hundreds of agit-prop groups modeled on the Blue Blouse in Europe, North America, and Asia, including the Berlin Red Rockets and Red Megaphone in Germany (where there were 150 workers theatre troupes sponsored by the German Communist Party), the Blue Blouses of Chicago and the Los Angeles Red Rockets in the United States, the Blue Blouses of Bobigny in France, and Red Megaphone in Japan.⁴⁷⁵

While these international groups were inspired by the Blue Blouse movement, they were not organized by the Moscow center, nor did they rely on it for material. As one member of the

⁴⁷⁴ For an example of one of the positive reports see, “Blue Blouses of Moscow.” *Christian Science Monitor* (3 April 1928) 12. Examples of correspondence include letters published in the American communist journals *New Masses* (October 1930), 20 and *Workers Theatre* (April 1931) 6-8, as well as an earlier letter from Iuzhanin published in the “Informative Bulletin of the Society for cultural Relations between the USSR and foreign countries” 9-10 (11 March 1927), a copy of which is available in box 38 folder 18 of the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana Collection of the Harvard Theatre Collection.

⁴⁷⁵ For a discussion of agit-prop groups influenced by the Blue Blouse in Germany, see Stourac and McCreery. For their activity in North America, see Mally, *The Americanization of the Living Newspaper*. Mally discusses the international aspects of the movement more broadly in her article, “Exporting Soviet Culture: The Case of Agitprop Theater.” Further documents and essays are available in volumes 2 and 3 of Bablet, Denis, ed. *Le Theatre d’Agit-prop de 1917 a 1932*. Lausanne: La Cite, 1977.

Blue Blouses of Chicago reported, their repertoire consisted largely of mass chants by Max Appelman, “a young working class poet” with titles including “Gotta Build Blues,” “Dead Soldiers Live,” and “Tom Mooney.”⁴⁷⁶ As a result, these groups were largely unaffected by the closure of *Blue Blouse* or the difficulties faced by its editors and organizers (if they were aware of these turns of events at all--there is no evidence to suggest that they knew anything about the trouble in the Soviet Union). American Blue Blouse troupes claimed, in fact, to gain popularity significantly during the early 1930s. The Rebel Players of Los Angeles claimed that their two troupes performed for 17,000 spectators, sometimes giving three performances a night, while the Blue Blouses of Chicago’s sketch, “Scottsboro” was presented forty times in parks, union halls, and African American churches (Figure 69).⁴⁷⁷

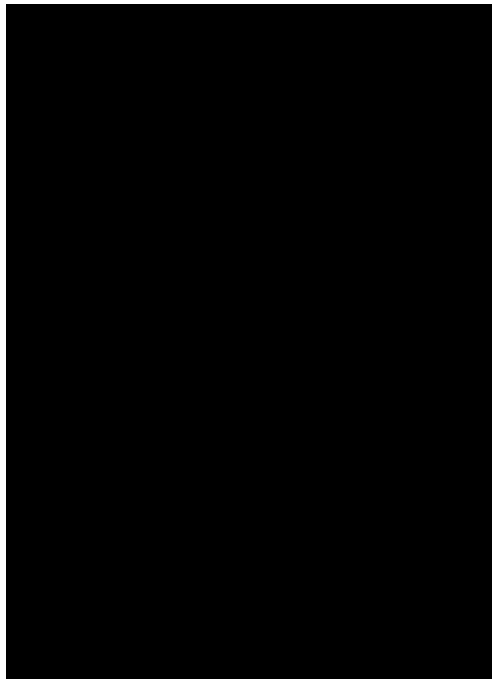


Figure 69. The Blue Blouses of Chicago. “Scottsboro.” *International Theatre* 1 (1934), 18.

⁴⁷⁶ Sager, Ben. “The Blue Blouses of Chicago.” *International Theatre* (Jan. 1934) 18.

⁴⁷⁷ Cutler, Victor. “The Rebel Players of Los Angeles.” *International Theatre* (Jan. 1934) 19-20; Sager 18.

In 1930, in an attempt to strengthen this growing international movement, the Comintern founded the International Union of Revolutionary Theatres (*Mezhdunarodnoe ob'edinenie revoliutsionnykh teatrov*, or MORT), which quickly began planning a festival that would bring together agit-prop troupes from around the world—The International Olympiad of Revolutionary Theatres.⁴⁷⁸ Originally scheduled for 1932 to coincide with the fifteenth anniversary of the Russian Revolution, the difficulties that the various troupes experienced with finding funding for a trip to Moscow caused the festival to be postponed until May 1933.⁴⁷⁹ This postponement proved to be inauspicious. The members of Red Megaphone from Japan were arrested shortly before their departure for Moscow and most of the German groups that had planned to attend were prevented from leaving the country.⁴⁸⁰ Furthermore, by the time the festival had arrived, the doors of the Blue Blouse theatre in Moscow had closed and the remnants of the organizational center had disbanded, essentially concluding the debate surrounding Do-It-Yourself theatre—signaling the final defeat of Living Newspaper performance in the Soviet Union and the victory of long-form plays.

The Soviet groups selected to attend the Olympiad had, for the most part, already adapted to these new aesthetic expectations. The troupe of the Moscow machine-builder's union, for example, had established close ties with the Moscow Art Theatre and was being led by Ivan Moskvina, an actor in the Moscow Art Theatre's company.⁴⁸¹ A number of the other Soviet troupes were members of TRAM, the Theatre of Young Workers, which had started out as a movement of agit-prop theatres, similar to the Blue Blouse troupes, but had largely transitioned

⁴⁷⁸ MORT and the International Olympiad of Revolutionary Theatres are discussed at length in Mally, "Exporting Soviet Culture." For a discussion of a domestic Olympiad of Do-it-yourself Art, see Mally, Lynn. "Autonomous theatre and the Origins of Socialist Realism: The 1932 Olympiad of Autonomous Art." *Russian Review* 52.2 (1993); 198-212.

⁴⁷⁹ Mally, "Exporting Soviet Culture" 328-329.

⁴⁸⁰ Mally, "Exporting Soviet Culture" 332.

⁴⁸¹ Mally, "Exporting Soviet Culture" 335-336.

to a much more respectable repertoire: when the Olympiad opened in Moscow the Leningrad TRAM had just premiered its production of Denis Fovizin's 18th century neoclassical comedy, *The Minor*.⁴⁸²

As a result, the performances, which took place in Moscow's Music Hall generally alternated between foreign agit-prop (often performed by incomplete collectives—the British delegation was cobbled together from members of two different London troupes), performances of national song and dance (the contribution of the Mongolian troupe, for example), and semi-professional full length plays performed by Russians, with the Olympiad's judges vocally performing the latter.⁴⁸³ The Parisian Blue Blouses of Bobigny performed a Living Newspaper satirizing bourgeois culture, performing skits about movie stars, patriotic war films, and tattooed ladies, songs about the struggle against fascism and a march, "Forward," while the Moscow central TRAM closed the festival with a production of Ivan Mykytenko's full length "Girls of our Country" (Figure 70).⁴⁸⁴ Among the Soviet troupes, only the troupe from Kharkiv's Hammer and Sickle Factory's TRAM (one of two TRAM groups from Kharkiv to perform) resembled a Living Newspaper in the Blue Blouse tradition: a mixture of couplets, comic duets, and sketches drawn "wholly from local, factory material."⁴⁸⁵ N. Oruzhennikov, one of the reviewers justified this by stressing the professionalism of the TRAM performers, insisting that

⁴⁸² On TRAM, see Mally, *Revolutionary Acts* 109-145; Mally, Lynn. "The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Youth Theater TRAM." *Slavic Review* 51.3 (1992), 411-430; Mironova, V. *TRAM: Agitatsionnyi molodezhnyi teatr, 1920-1930kh gg.* Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1984.

⁴⁸³ Mally "Exporting Soviet Culture," 333. For reviews of the performances at the Olympiad, see Oruzhennikov, N. "Iskusstvo revoliutsionnogo gneva." *Vecherniaia Moskva* (27 May 1933), 3; Oruzhennikov, N. "Rezerv darovani." *Vecherniaia Moskva* (28 May, 1933), 3; Oruzhennikov, N. "Barrikady smekha." *Vecherniaia Moskva* (30 May 1933), 3.; Oruzhennikov, N. "Pered itogami." *Vecherniaia Moskva* (31 May 1933), 3; "Olimpiada teatra zakrilas'" *Vecherniaia Moskva* (32 May 1933), 3; Tretiakov, Sergei. "Moskoviada." *Pravda* (31 May 1933), 3; Kon, Feliks. "Smotr revoliutsionnykh teatral'nykh cil." *Pravda* (31 May 1933), 3. For a list of the pieces performed by the Blue Blouses of Bobigny, see RGASPI f.540 op.1 d.64 l. 48.

⁴⁸⁴ "Barrkiady smekha" 3; Olimpiada teatra zakrilas'" 3. Mykytenko was a member of the Ukrainian affiliate of the Revolutionary Association of Proletarian Writers, and is best known for his play, *The Dictatorship*, which received an aggressively destabilizing staging by Les Kurbas in 1930.

⁴⁸⁵ "Rezerv darovani." 3.

“the experience of the Ukrianian TRAMists differed from that of usual Blue Blouseniks in that each of the participants is a complete performer. Dancers, singers, and actors, the TRAMists transform a lacking text with infectious joy.”⁴⁸⁶

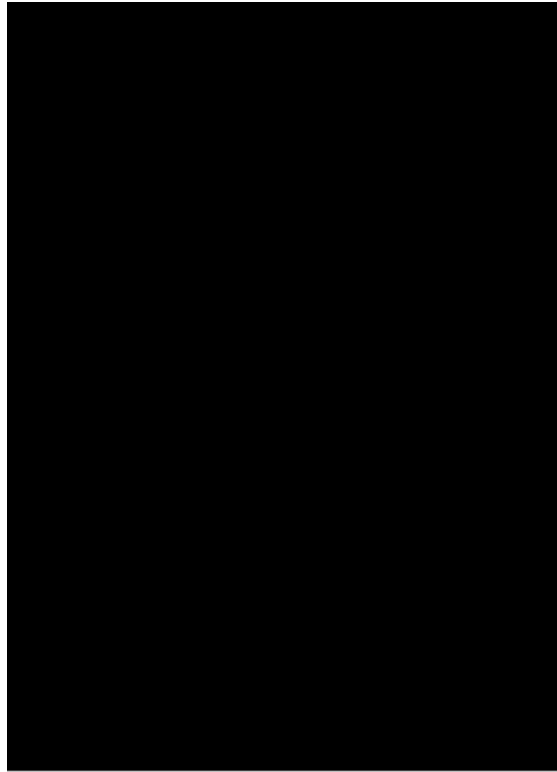


Figure 70. The Blue Blouses of Bobigny. *Pravda* 31 May 1933, p3.

While the festival’s presidium was composed of figures with favorable attitudes towards avant-garde and agit-prop art—Meyerhold, Aleksandr Tairov, Erwin Piscator and the French director Leon Moussinac—the panel of judges—which included Genrikh Diament, the head of MORT, several trade union officials, and Aleksandr Afinogenov, one of the playwrights who helped to define socialist realist aesthetics—were much more conservative.⁴⁸⁷ As Mally notes, these judges cited the foreigner’s continued use of Living Newspaper techniques to support a sense of the superiority of Soviet culture:

⁴⁸⁶ “Rezerv darovanii” 3.

⁴⁸⁷ Mally, “Exporting Soviet Culture” 333. Oruzhennikov, “Iskusstvo revoliutsionnogo gneva” 3.

Diament, MORT's leader, issued a blistering critique of foreign performances. He bemoaned the foreign troupes' failure to discover ways of presenting important political messages using a more compelling dramatic form. Their appeals to fight against fascists sounded the same, regardless of the country of origin. Slogans had won out over images. The first lesson of the day... was to fight against schematism, the invective most commonly used against agitprop work.⁴⁸⁸

The judges' commentary on the work of Blue Blouses of Bobigny, who fared better than many of the other foreign groups, illustrates this tendency. Even though the troupe was praised for its level of activism, which "could serve as an example to other groups," they were criticized for failing to "carry out systematic work to raise the political qualifications of its members." "One of their greatest shortcomings," the report continued was the "low quality of the literary material," which "committed a series of serious mistakes of both a political and artistic order... the Blue Blouses of Babigny could perform with success on the program of any bourgeois cabaret"—quite a serious charge. The report concludes with a suggestion that the troupe would benefit immensely if its members "with all seriousness, took upon themselves the task of serious political study and the struggle for quality in artistic form," by abandoning the Living Newspaper for long form plays like Boris Lavrenev's full-length proto-socialist realist play, *The Rupture*, which they had recently added to their repertoire.⁴⁸⁹ As Mally summarizes it, they felt that "the Blue Blouse had been rooted out in the Soviet Union and the same should now happen abroad."⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁸ Mally, "Exporting Soviet Culture" 336.

⁴⁸⁹ RGASPI f.540 op.1 d.64 l. 47-49.

⁴⁹⁰ Mally, "Exporting Soviet Culture" 335.

Agit prop groups from around the world had come to Moscow only to find out that rather than travelling to the center of the Blue Blouse movement, they had travelled to a place where the movement was no more. Even though the majority of the groups participating in the Olympiad accepted the criticism directed at them, shifting towards a more “professional” repertoire, the Blue Blouse movement’s influence did not evaporate overnight, famously taking hold in the Federal Theatre Project’s adoption of the Living Newspaper.⁴⁹¹ The loss of the center provided by the Blue Blouse headquarters, their Moscow troupes, and their magazine had a devastating effect on radical amateur theatre worldwide--without their organizational support and artistic example a growing movement was extinguished. Although radical theatres would continue to appear (most notably in the 1960s), they functioned largely in isolation, lacking the organizational coherence that the Blue Blouse was striving towards.

6.4 CONCLUSION

The Soviet project brought about by the Russian Revolution aimed at nothing less than the total reorganization of society. And that new society demanded a new organization of space. The major characteristic of the space that was being produced in the 1920s, which Vladimir Paperny has named “Culture One,” was a collective, horizontal uniformity that rejected hierarchical organization in an attempt to create a world in which, in the words of architects Mikhail Okhitovich and Moisei Ginsburg, “every center is a periphery and every periphery is a

⁴⁹¹ For an excellent study of the relationship between the Federal Theatre Project and the Blue Blouse movement, see Mally, *The Americanization of the Living Newspaper*, *passim*.

center.”⁴⁹² While the members of the Blue Blouse movement were far from the only artists working to imagine or embody the new society and its space, because of the size of the organization and its geographic ambition, its contribution to the production and reproduction of Soviet Space was substantial.

The Blue Blouse movement stretched across the material space of the Soviet Union, growing outwards from the Moscow beer halls, where the first Blue Blouse troupes performed to occupy the stages of the workers’ clubs that formed the backbone of the Soviet cultural network. They were remarkably successful at overcoming the obstacles imposed by the physical and cultural geography of the Soviet Union, eventually establishing thousands of troupes (not all of which were officially registered) across the territory of the state, including in the new national territories that had been recognized. The result of this was the mobilization of tens or hundreds of thousands of workers as do-it-yourself performers, engaged in a collective project of imagining the Soviet Union—often in places that had previously only had a minimal theatrical tradition.

The Blue Blouse movement’s rapid expansion across the physical space of the Soviet Union was facilitated by their magazine, *Blue Blouse*, which functioned as a discursive space—what David Harvey, following Henri Lefebvre, terms a “Representation of Space”—in which the movement could theorize, reproduce, and imagine itself. The pages of the magazine were occupied by material intended for production on the stages of workers’ clubs, but also by theoretical arguments, announcements, letters, and photographs. These supplemental departments allowed members of the movement producing Blue Blouse work on the periphery access to the discursive space of the movement, even if it was carefully controlled by the

⁴⁹²Quoted in Paperny 74.

magazine's editors. This access was vital however, as the movement was organized through the Moscow center with little interaction between the peripheral troupes—seeing the work of other Blue Blouse troupes on the pages of the magazine produced an image of the movement that allowed members to imagine themselves as something larger than an isolated do-it-yourself theatre.

On the stage Blue Blouse troupes imagined a Soviet space that they inhabited, and one which they hoped to inhabit, producing what Harvey terms a “Space of Representation.” In their Living Newspapers, Blue Blouse troupes enacted the collectivity and equality of the new space, imagining its effects on their work lives and their family lives, on international conflicts and domestic squabbles. Despite the uniformity of this vision, individual troupes were instructed to adapt work to their local needs, thus blending statewide concerns like defense or industrialization with other issues that might be closer to home.

As a result of this diversity within the uniform space of the Soviet state, local conditions played an important role in shaping the work produced by individual troupes within the movement. The activity of troupes operating in Kharkiv was affected by the city's ethnic diversity, with troupes performing in Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian. The status of the movement was contested by locals unwilling to cede leadership to a Moscow organization run by professionals, as they felt this produced hierarchies of place and of people. Finally the movement was affected by the political pressures of the city's status as capital of the Ukrainian SSR, which resulted in the discouragement of production of Russian-language culture and the promotion of nationally Ukrainian rivals.

But by the 1930s the movement was in serious decline. The magazine, *Blue Blouse*, had been closed, “merged” with the magazine *Club Stage*, radically altering the movement's ability

to operate within discursive space. Discouraged by this loss, as well as the concurrent loss of the movement's prestige, one by one the Blue Blouse's leading artists abandoned the organization, often simultaneously leaving theatre to work in the cinema. The displacement of the movement from the center of Soviet do-it-yourself activity was, perhaps most acutely felt by Boris Iuzhanin, the movement's founder who took rash action and found himself displaced from Moscow to a prison camp. But it was also felt by others—by provincial troupes who, prevented from participating in a vibrant movement by the closure of magazines, gradually ceased to perform; and by international followers of the movement, some of whom came to Moscow expecting to perform in the heart of global agit-prop culture only to find that Living Newspapers were no longer being produced there.

While the reasons for the movement's decline are numerous, it is worth noting that it coincided with a radical change in the character of Soviet space—the shift from the dominance of Paperny's Culture One to Culture Two. The spatial character of Culture Two is well illustrated by Grigorii Aleksandrov's 1938 musical film, *Volga-Volga*, whose creative team included three former Blue Blouseniks: Mikail Vol'pin (who co-authored the script with Nikolai Erdman, a frequent collaborator of Vladimir Mass), Vasillii Lebedev-Kumach (who authored the lyrics), and Isaac Dunaevskii (who composed the music). The film re-imagines do-it-yourself culture for the 1930s as Dunia (played by Liubov Orlova), a young postal worker in the backwater town of Melkovodsk, struggles to take her amateur musical group to a competition of amateur culture in Moscow. Standing in her way is an obstinate bureaucrat, Byvalov, who cannot recognize the talent surrounding him, and her boyfriend Alesha, who wants to take the town's classical orchestra to Moscow instead. Obsessed with the masters of the western cannon, Alesha dismisses the song Dunia has composed out of hand, informing her that she cannot write

music because “you are a letter carrier and not a composer.” The bulk of the film follows the two orchestras as they race down the Volga river on barges towards Moscow. As Dunia’s barge nears the city, however, a disaster strikes and the score of her song is washed overboard. But all is not lost: page by page, it is recovered by the citizens of the city and when the boats arrive, all of Moscow is singing Dunia’s song, “The Song of the Volga”—a lively and catchy celebration of Soviet life:

Many a song has been written about the Volga
All were mirthless in the minor key/
It was anguish that spawned those melodies,
Now it’s joy and happiness and glee.
Sing a ringing and cheerful song
That would show how strong we are.
May it reach our bright golden sun,
May it reach every person’s heart.
We dispersed every dark storm cloud,
Spring has come to our dear motherland,
Like the Volga our life is full-blooded,
And this free life will not ever end.

Dunia is brought before a panel composed of representatives of all of the nationalities of the Soviet Union and immediately awarded first place in recognition of her achievements.

Volga-Volga is almost a complete inversion of the spatial values and practices of the Blue Blouse movement. The collective nature of living newspaper performance is replaced by the recognition of the individual greatness of Dunia, while the relative anonymity of Blue Blouse

performers (anybody could join a troupe) is inverted by the recognizability of Orlova, one of the most popular movie stars in the Soviet Union at that time. Similarly the orientation towards the future that occupies so much of the blue blouse imagination—whether it was building a classless society, or overcoming the alienation between man and machine is replaced in *Volga-Volga*, as the lyrics to the “Song of the Volga” make clear, with a satisfaction with the joys of the present and the achievements already made. Similarly the relationship between Moscow and the periphery is radically altered as the uniform space of Culture One is replaced by the hierarchical space of Culture Two. As Paperny details, in the 1930s attempts to eliminate the difference between center and periphery were abandoned in favor of making Moscow, in Stalin’s words “the model for all the capitals of the world.”⁴⁹³ As Moscow was reconstructed, using a disproportionate amount of the country’s resources, residential restrictions were instituted, ensuring that “the ‘better’ people... were closer to Moscow, the center of the world..., while the ‘poorer’ people occupied the periphery.”⁴⁹⁴ *Volga-Volga* illustrates this dynamic, as everything is pulled towards the center—talented artists, great music, all of the best representatives of peripheral populations. The image of the sheet music floating down the river to Moscow, itself, is a direct inversion of the work done by *Blue Blouse*, carrying the best material produced in the center to the periphery in an attempt to remove the cultural distance between the two.

The Blue Blouse movement participated in the production and reproduction of Soviet space in the decade and a half following the Revolution, imagining and embodying an attempt at a radical equality, grounded in the uniformity of space and the uniformity of people. In principle—if not always in practice—this involved a refusal to privilege the professional artist over the non-professional or the center over the periphery. The Blue Blouse strove, in their

⁴⁹³ Quoted in Paperny 77.

⁴⁹⁴ Paperny 78.

organization of the material space of the Soviet Union, their development of a discursive space on the pages of their magazine, and the construction of an imaginary space on the stages of workers' clubs and beer halls across the new state, to enable the non-professional on the periphery to participate in the production a new space reflecting a new sociality. The ubiquity and vitality of the Blue Blouse movement suggests the extent of the success of their engagement with the new space of the Soviet Union, as does their inability to survive as the character of that space began to change.

APPENDIX A

REGISTERED BLUE BLOUSE TROUPES BY REGION

The following list was compiled from the registry of Blue Blouse troupes that appeared in *Siniia Bluza* from 1926 to 1928. I have attempted to organize the list of troupes in such a way as to be maximally useful to contemporary readers who may or may not be overly familiar with Soviet Geography, which has led to certain anachronisms. The first division is into the national republics that gained independence with the breakup of the Soviet Union (regardless of their administrative status in the 1920s). Russia is further divided into four broad geographic regions: west of the Urals, the North Caucasus, the Urals, and Siberia. Within each of these divisions troupes are listed by their current administrative regions (rather than the ones they were a part of in the 1920s) with national territories that did not gain independence in 1991 listed following the other provinces in the region. In general the lists are organized according to the English alphabet, but I have placed Russia ahead of the other national territories, and Moscow and Leningrad before the other administrative regions in western Russia.

Each entry contains the following information: City. Troupe name. Affiliated organization. Registration number. Issue of *Blue Blouse* in which their registration was published.

A.1 RUSSIAN SFSR (WEST OF URALS)

A.1.1 Moscow

Moscow. "Siniiaia Bluza." Local committee of the division of labor and social welfare. 18. 50 (1927).

Moscow. "Spaika." MONO 9th School. 57. 50 (1927).

Moscow. "Siniiaia Bluza." Plekhanov institute of economics. 108. 51 (1927).

Moscow. "Siniiaia Bluza." VLKSM School no. 5. 209. 53-54 (1927).

Moscow. "Zveno Sviazi." Central club of communications workers. 216. 53-54 (1927).

Moscow. "Kursant." MONO united courses. 256. 55-56 (1927).

Moscow. "Siniiaia Bluza." 30th school (krasno-Prezensk region). 258. 55-56 (1927).

Moscow. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Young proletariat" house of professional school students. 264. 55-56 (1927).

Moscow. "Siniiaia Bluza." Club of the "Kamenev" construction technicum. 265. 55-56 (1927).

Moscow. "Siniiaia Bluza." Artistic union MK of MOPR. 271. 55-56 (1927).

Moscow. "Svetlyi put'." Dormitory of the KhONO professional school. 287. 55-56 (1927).

Moscow. "Zhivgaz MK MOPRa." 7th division of the Moscow committee of MOPR. 320. 57-58 (1927).

Moscow. "Siniiaia Bluza." Committee of workers no. 26. 329. 57-58 (1927).

Moscow. "Krasnaia Planetka." [illegible]. 399. 69-70 (1927).

Moscow. "Prozhektor." "Thomas Edison" school no. 9. 411. 69-70 (1927).

Moscow. "Sinii Luch." KhONO school no. 9-B. 445. nn (1927).

Moscow. "Prizyv." Club of the united living comradeships of homes 4, 6, and 8 of Krivoi pereulok. 453. 73 (1928).

Moscow. "Dozor." 1st and 5th united group committees of the union of Soviet sales workers. 523. 75 (1928).

Moscow. "Sdvig." Central statistical commission of the USSR. 524. 75 (1928).

A.1.2 Moscow Region

Batraki. "Tiski." Union of railworkers. 294. 55-56 (1927).

Butkovo. "Butkovskii Klich." Reading hut. 536. 76 (1928).

Dubki. "Siniiaia bluza dubki." Commune of orphaned teenagers SPON MONO. 292. 55-56 (1927).

Monino. "Burevestnik." "Lantsutskii" factory. 396. 69-70 (1927).

Mozhaisk. "Siniiaia Bluza." 206. 53-54 (1927).

Pavlovskaaia. "Serp." 197. 53-54 (1927).

Podol'sk. "Krasnyi prosveshchenets." Club of enlightenment workers. 319. 57-58 (1927).

Ramenskoe. "Ekho Tekstilei." "Voronskii" Club" of the "Red Flag" factory. 443. nn (1927).

Ramenskoe. "Ekho Tekstilei." "Voronskii" club of the "Red Flag" factory. 477. 73 (1928).

Sadki. "Blue Blouse of the Sadovskii Textile Workers." Club of the Hammer and Sickle factory. 9. 50 (1927).

Serpukhov. "Siniiaia Bluza." Union of food workers. 295. 55-56 (1927).

Shedrino. "Krasnaia Bluza." Reading hut. 479. 73 (1928).

Shelkovo. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Liebknecht" workers' club. 91. 50 (1927).

Titovo. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Lunacharskii" club. 71. 50 (1927).

Volokolamsk. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Lenin" club. 540. 77 (1928).

Vysokovskoi Factory. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Red textile worker" club. 275. 55-56 (1927).

A.1.3 Leningrad Region

Kronshtadt. "Zhenskii zhurnal khimikov." Union of pharmacists." 328. 57-58 (1927).

Leningrad. "Gimnasterka." 8th Railway regiment. 217. 53-54 (1927).

Leningrad. "Zummer." Communication brigade. 339. 63-64 (1927).

Leningrad. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Frunze" professional-technical school NKSO. 354. 59-60 (1927).

Leningrad. "Zila Bluze." Latvian pedagogical technicum. 491. 74 (1928).

Oranenbaum. "Siniiaia Bluza." Forest Technicum. 6. 50 (1927).

Sias'stoi. "Grokhot." "Komintern" workers' club. 4. 50 (1927).

Trotsk. "Rezets." Cultural section of the trade union bureau. 59. 50 (1927).

Vytegra. "Sverlo." House of enlightenment. 288. 55-56 (1927).

A.1.4 Arkhangel'sk Region

Arkhangel'sk. "Krasnyi Pil'shchik." "Red Ray" club. 119. 51 (1927).

A.1.5 Astrakhan Region

Krasnyi Iar. "Krasnyi rybak." "VKP" school. 539. 77 (1928).

Tambovka. "Potrebilovka." Reading hut. 293. 55-56 (1927).

Vladimirovskaia. "Molodoi gorniak." "Vorovskii" workers' club. 485. 74 (1928).

A.1.6 Briansk Region

Bezhitsa. "Siniaia Bluza." "3rd Internationale" metalworkers' club. 259. 55-56 (1927).

Briansk. "Tiski." Railworkers' club. 363. 63-64 (1927).

Liudinovo. "Gorn." "Ignat Fokin" metalworkers' club. 541. 77 (1928).

Novozybkov. "Siniaia Bluza." Railworker's Union. 163. 52 (1927).

Novozybkov. "Prozhektor." "Tomskii" central workers' club. 226. 53-54 (1927).

Pochep. "Siniaia Bluza." Party-union club. 101. 50 (1927).

Pochep. "Iunyi zheleznodorozhnik." Railworkers' club. 151. 52 (1927).

Unecha. "Prozhektor." "Luxemburg" club. 314. 57-58 (1927).

Zlyka. "Siniaia Bluza." Workers' club. 546. 77 (1928).

A.1.7 Iaroslavl' Region.

Iaroslavl'. "Siniaia Bluza." "Red Transport Worker" club. 159. 52 (1927).

Iaroslavl'. "Siniaia Bluza." "Dzerzhinskii" automobile factory. 355. 59-60 (1927).

Iaroslavl'. "Siniaia BLuza." Brake factory. 356. 59-60 (1927).

Iaroslavl'. "Tolkach." "Tomskii" club. 428. nn (1927.)

Iaroslavl'. "Siniaia Bluza im Molodoi Gvardii." "October Revolution" Inter-union club. 451. 73
(1928).

Iaroslavl'. "Prozhektor." "10th October" workers' club. 515. 75 (1928).

A.1.8 Ivanovo-Voznesensk Region

Iur'ev-Pol'skii. "Siniaia Bluza." Workers' club of the "Avangard" factory. 95. 50 (1927).

Ivanovo-Voznesensk. "Siniaia Bluza." Railworkers' club. 208. 53-54 (1927).

Ivanovo-Voznesensk. "Krasnyi Khimik." Club of the "Baturin" state chemical club. 456. 73 (1928).

Kineshma. "Siniaia Bluza-- Gudok." Club of railworkers and metalworkers. 370. 63-64 (1927).

Puchezh. "Siniaia Bluza." Regional committee of Narpit. 504. 74 (1928).

"Shugaikha" Chemical Factory. "Siniaia Bluza." 52. 50 (1927).

Shuia. "Siniaia Bluza." Shuia factory No. 1. 13. 50 (1927).

Shuia. "Rubanok." Palace of labor. 129. 51 (1927).

Shuia. "Vereteno." Textile Factory No. 2. 177. 52 (1927).

Staraia Vichuga. "Siniaia Bluza." "Lenin" workers' club. 127. 51 (1927).

Vychuga. "Chelnok." "Red Profintern" club. 140. 52 (1927).

Vychuga. "Siniaia Bluza." VLKSM. 437. nn (1927.)

A.1.9 Kaluga Region

Kaluga. "Siniaia Bluza." Railworkers' club. 207. 53-54 (1927).

Tarusa. "Siniaia Bluza." "Volodarskii" union club. 126. 51 (1927).

A.1.10 Kostroma Region

Kostroma. "Mutovka." Red corner of the foodworkers' union. 221. 53-54 (1927).

Kostroma. "Fag." Regional council. 402. 69-70 (1927).

A.1.11 Kursk Region

L'gov. "Molot." "Rudzutaka" club. 212. 52 (1927).

Peny. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Liebknecht" sugar factory. 282. 55-56 (1927).

A.1.12 Nizhnii Novgorod Region

Gagino. "Siniiaia Bluza." Reading hut. 347. 59-60 (1927).

Kulebaskii Metalworks. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Metallist" workers' club. 149. 52 (1927).

Kurza. "Siniiaia Bluza." Construction workers' union. 418. 69-70 (1927).

Kuskovo. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Liebknecht" railworkers' club. 20. 50 (1927).

Nizhnii Novgorod. "Smychka." Club of the "May 1" psychiatric hospital. 156. 52 (1927).

Nizhnii Novgorod. "Krasnyi Stroitel'." Union of builders. 274. 55-56 (1927).

Nizhnii Novgorod. "Krasnoetniki." Club of the "Krasnaia Etna" factory. 313. 55-56 (1927).

Nizhnii Novgorod. "Siniiaia Bluza." Nizhegorodsko-Kanevinskii central workers' club. 325. 57-58 (1927).

Nizhnii Novgorod. "Novyi put'." Nizhegorodsko-Kanevinskii central workers' club. 326. 57-58 (1927).

Nizhnii Novgorod. "Profrabotnik." Nizhegorodsko-Kanevinskii central workers' club. 327. 57-58 (1927).

Nizhnii Novgorod. "Krasnyi tkach." "Red October" textile factory club. 366. 63-64 (1927).

Pavlov na Oke. "Shtamp." Workers' club of the union of metalworkers. 527. 76 (1928).

Pervomaisk. "Profrabotnik." "Lenin" central workers' club. 535. 76 (1928).

Semenov. "Sovetskii Kustar'." "October" railworkers' club. 234. 53-54 (1927).

Sergach. "Siniiaia Bluza." "K. Marx" Union club. 44. 50 (1927).

Sergach. "Siniiaia Bluza." Railworker's club. 50. 50 (1927).

Shar'ia. "Shar'inskii luch." "Red transporter" club. 289. 55-56 (1927).

Vetluzhskaia. "Gudok." "Bogdanov" club. 438. nn (1927).

A.1.13 Northern Dvinsk Region

Krasavino. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Zinov'ev" workers' club. 205. 52 (1927).

Krasavino. "Chelnok." Club of the linen factory. 379. 65-66 (1927).

Nikol'sk. "Klubist." Trade union club. 136. 51 (1927).

Velikii-Ustiug. "Siniiaia Bluza Vodnikov." Regional committee of water-transport workers. 12. 50 (1927).

Voznesen'e. "Siniiaia Bluza." Trade union club. 244. 53-54 (1927).

A.1.14 Novgorod Region

Borovichi. "Krasnaia Iskra." "Lenin" party worker's club. 98. 50 (1927).

Lemenka. "Siniiaia Bluza." Regional committee of railworkers no. 23. 512. 75 (1928).

Medvedevo. "Siniiaia Bluza." Railworkers' club. 268. 55-56 (1927).

Novgorod. "Siniiaia Bluza." City council of the union of atheists. 144. 52 (1927).

Novgorod. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Great October" club. 457. 73 (1928).

Staraiia Russa. "Krasnyi Fanershchik." State plywood factory. 164. 52 (1927).

Staraiia Russa. "Krasnyi semafor." "Liebknecht" railworkers' club. 278. 55-56 (1927).

Uglovka. "Stroitel'." Newspaper factory. 452. 73 (1928).

Zaluch'e. "Pakhar'." Reading hut. 26. 50 (1927).

A.1.15 Orenburg Region

Buzuluk. "Siniiaia Bluza." Agricultural technicum. 222. 53-54 (1927).

Koltubanka. "Derevoobdelochnik." Woodworkers' club. 175. 52 (1927).

Orenburg. "Paial'nik." "Lenin" workers' club. 128. 51 (1927).

Orenburg. "Gorn." "Zinov'ev" club. 152. 52 (1927).

Orenburg. "Siniiaia Bluza." Regional trial committee. 193. 52 (1927).

Orenburg. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Il'ich" club of the union of medical workers. 224. 53-54 (1927).

Orenburg. "Siniiaia Bluza." Club of political enlightenment workers. 245. 53-54 (1927).

Orenburg. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Stalin" club. 291. 55-56 (1927).

Orenburg. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Sverdlov" club of the union of Soviet tradeworkers. 346. 59-60 (1927).

A.1.16 Orel' Region

Khrapovitskaia. "Dereobdelochnik." "Sverdlov" lumber mill workers' club. 513. 75 (1928).

Mtsensk. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Il'ich" railworkers' club. 65. 50 (1927).

A.1.17 Penza Region

Archada. "Trud." "10th anniversary of October" railworkers' club. 461. 73 (1928).

Kovylkino. "Signal." Workers' club. 64. 50 (1927).

Novyi Shkaft. "Siniiaia Bluza." Cloth factory. 412. 69-70 (1927).

A.1.18 Pskov Region

Dno. "Dnovskii Glaz." "Dzerzhinskii" workers' club. 145. 52 (1927).

Nevel'. "Zhivoi Gudok." "Red October" club. 337. 63-64 (1927).

Ostrov. "Rupor." "Lenin" inter-union club. 393. 67-68 (1927).

Pskov. "Zila Bluze." Youth section of the national minorities club. 118. 51 (1927).

Sebezh. "Krasnyi pogramichnik." OGPU border guard. 316. 57-58 (1927).

A.1.19 Riazan' Region

Danilovo. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Lenin" club. 537. 76 (1928).

Dankovo. "Siniiaia Bluza." Party-union club. 102. 50 (1927).

Elat'ma. "Siniiaia Bluza." 148. 52 (1927).

Kasimov. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Red textile worker" factory. 181. 52 (1927).

Mosolovo. "Krasnaia Bluza." Reading hut. 387. 67-68 (1927).

Ranenburg. "Komsoglaz." Youth section of the "Liebknecht" club. 304. 55-56 (1927).

Ranenburg. "Svistok." Red corner of the administration division. 372. 63-64 (1927).

Riazan'. "Siniiaia Bluza." United club of leatherworkers and medical workers. 51. 50 (1927).

Riazan'. "Krasnyi Klin." Liquor factory. 371. 63-64 (1927).

Sasovo. "Krasnaia Rubakha." Inter-union club. 154. 52 (1927).

Zaraisk. "Siniiaia Bluza." Club of the central shoe factory. 42. 50 (1927).

Zaraisk. "Siniiaia Bluza." Club of the "Red east" factory. 267. 55-56 (1927).

A.1.20 Samara Region

Buguruslan. "Iskra." Club of the union of Soviet tradeworkers. 40. 50 (1927).

Buzuluk. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Kobozev" workers' club. 231. 53-54 (1927).

Kimel'. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Chicherin" workers' club. 49. 50 (1927).

Samara. "Metallist." Water-light club of the central electrical station. 93. 50 (1927).

Samara. "Bezbozhnik." Union of atheists. 176. 52 (1927).

Samara. "Volgar'." Boatmans' club. 189. 52 (1927).

Samara. "Igly kanata." Palace of culture of the machine workers' union. 398. 69-70 (1927).

Pugachov. "Siniiaia Bluza. Union of foodworkers. 79. 50 (1927).

Timashevo. "Formomoishchik." "Lenin" workers' club. 38. 50 (1927).

Trotsk. "Vzryvatel'." Workers club of the union of chemists. 448. 73 (1928).

A.1.21 Saratov Region

Balashev. "Strelka." "Liebknecht" workers' club. 348. 59-60 (1927).

Kuznetsk. "Klubnyi Klich." United club. 400. 69-70 (1927).

Kuznetsk. "Siniiaia Bluza." Regional party school. 462. 73 (1928).

Kuznetsk. "Shkolnyi luch." Regional living newspaper of national minorities--Mordovans, Chuvashi, Tatars. 463. 73 (1928).

Saratov. "Moprovets." 2nd regional committee of MOPR. 323. 57-58 (1927).

Saratov. "Kiia." Foreign language courses. 425. nn (1927.)

A.1.22 Smolensk Region

Gzhatsk. "Lenin." International workers' club. 19. 50 (1927).

A.1.23 Stalingrad Region

Stalingrad. "Tramvai." Local committee of the tramway depot. 410. 69-70 (1927).

Uriupinskaia. "Tekhnikumets." Agricultural technicum. 63. 50 (1927).

A.1.24 Tambov Region

Griazno. "Siniaia Bluza." "Red October" club. 361. 61-62 (1927).

Kozlov. "Siniaia Bluza." Food workers' club. 519. 75 (1928).

Morshansk. "Budil'nik." Central workers' club. 396. 69-70 (1927).

Tambov. "Kooperator." Cultural division of the regional trade union council. 330. 63-64 (1927).

A.1.25 Tula Region

Belev. "Gaika." "8th Anniversary of the October Revolution" workers' club. 88. 50 (1927).

Bobriki. "Gorniatskaia Siniaia Bluza." "Rykov" mine committee. 514. 75 (1928).

Plavsk. "Sovrabotnik." Union club. 248. 53-54 (1927).

Plekhanovo. "Plekhanovskaia Siniia Bluza." "May 1" railworkers' club. 25. 50 (1927).

Tula. "Zhivgaz Aktivist." Scientific-technical club. 41. 50 (1927).

Tula. "Vpered." School of the FZU. 455. 73 (1928).

Tula. "Boevaia smena." 487. 74 (1928).

Tula. "Oktiabr'." "Profinetern" SSTS club. 518. 75 (1928).

A.1.26 Tver' Region

Bezhetsk. "Siniia Bluza." Regional political enlightenment. 385. 67-68 (1927).

Bezhetsk. "Siniia Bluza." Red corner. 492. 74 (1928).

Bologoe. "Siniia Bluza." Railworkers' club. 269. 55-56 (1927).

Kaliazin. "Siniia Bluza." International club. 94. 50 (1927).

Kashin. "Siniia Bluza." Union club. 139. 52 (1927).

Kashira. "Siniia Bluza." "Comintern" central club. 225. 53-54 (1927).

Mozdok. "Zhivoe zerkalo." 510. 75 (1928).

Peno. "Siniia Bluza." Film club. 419. 69-70 (1927).

Rzhev. "Zhivaia gazeta." Union of Soviet tradeworkers. 471. 73 (1928).

Vyshnii-Volochek. "Krasnyi Tekstil'shik." "Tobolka" factory club. 105. 50 (1927).

Vyshnii-Volochek. "Chelnok." "Liebknecht" club of the "Paris Commune" factory. 283. 55-56
(1927).

Tver'. "Siniia Bluza." Railworkers' club. 235. 53-54 (1927).

A.1.27 Ul'ianovsk Region

“Gladishev” cloth factory. “Siniiaia Bluza.” Club of the textile workers’ union. 420. 69-70 (1927).

Inza. “Sverlo.” “Lenin” workers’ club. 521. 75 (1928).

Syzran'. “Siniiaia Bluza.” “Red October” railworker’s club. 109. 51 (1927).

Syzran'. “Profshkolets.” Professional technical school. 122. 51 (1927).

Ul'ianovsk. “Siniiaia Bluza-- Podarok Oktiabriu.” Union of print workers. 495. 74 (1928).

A.1.28 Viatka Region

Bogorodskoe. “Derevnia Vpered.” 103. 50 (1927).

Iaransk. “Siniiaia Bluza.” Trade unionists’ club. 39. 50 (1927).

Kotel'nich. “Siniiaia Bluza.” Trade union bureau. 229. 53-54 (1927).

Kushnurskoe. “Siniiaia Bluza.” Peoples’ house. 522. 75 (1928).

Mediana and Zagar'e. “Fabrichnyi Gudok.” “Lenin” club. 246. 53-54 (1927).

Omutninsk. “Siniiaia Bluza.” “Dzerzhinskii” workers’ club. 464. 73 (1928).

Sovetskoe Iaransk. “Siniiaia Bluza.” Trade union club. 392. 67-68 (1927).

A.1.29 Vladimir Region

Gus'-Khrustal'nyi. “Siniiaia Bluza.” “Lenin” Textile workers’ club. 470. 73 (1928).

Gus'-Khrustal'nyi. “Siniiaia Bluza.” Textile workers’ club of the “Red Profintern” factory. 490. 74 (1928).

Karabanovo. "Siniaia Bluza." "3rd International" factory. 194. 52 (1927).

Kol'chugino. "Press." "Marx" workers' club. 72. 50 (1927)

Kol'chugino. "Siniaia Bluza." Youth section of the "K. Marx" workers' club. 502. 74 (1928).

Komsomolets factory. "Shelchok." 307. 55-56 (1927).

Kurlovo. "Siniaia Bluza." "Voldarskii" glass factory. 260. 55-56 (1927).

Murom. "Siniaia Bluza." "Lenin" workers' club. 66. 50 (1927).

Strunino. "Siniaia Bluza." "Stalin" club. 421. 69-70 (1927).

Undol. "Siniaia Bluza." "Lakin" factory. 69. 50 (1927).

Undol. "Siniaia Bluza." "Communist avant-garde" factory. 279. 55-56 (1927).

Velikodvor'e. "Almaz." "Lenin" workers' club. 166. 52 (1927).

Viazniki. "Osnova." "Nogin" club of the "Rosa Luxemburg" factory. 1. 50 (1927).

Vladimir. "Propeller." Regional aviation council. 232. 53-54 (1927).

Vladimir. "Semafor." Railworkers' club. 303. 55-56 (1927).

A.1.30 Vologda Region

Fabrika "Sokol." "Siniaia Bluza." 200. 53-54 (1927).

Pokrovskoe. "Siniaia Bluza." Region union of medical workers and the "October sprout" sanatorium. 390. 67-68 (1927).

Vel'sk. "Siniaia Bluza." Inter-union club. 188. 52 (1927).

Verkhovazh'e. "Molodoi profsoiuznik." Professional secretariat. 511. 75 (1928).

A.1.31 Voronezh Region

Budennogo. "Siniiaia Bluza." Worker-peasant club. 478. 73 (1928).

Evdanovo. "Siniiaia Bluza." Central trade union workers' club. 406. 69-70 (1927).

Korotoiak. "Trud." Butter factory. 251. 55-56 (1927).

Ostrogzhsk. "Siniiaia Bluza." Pedagogical technicum. 408. 69-70 (1927).

Talovaia. "Signal." Red corner. 374. 65-66 (1927).

Talovaia. "Signal." Red corner. 405. 69-70 (1927).

Urazovo. "Ot Stanka." Meat factory No. 2. 75. 50 (1927).

Voronezh. "Siniiaia Bluza." House of industrial workers. 43. 50 (1927).

Voronezh. "Krasnyi Fakel." Union of builders. 45. 50 (1927).

Voronezh. "Zhivgaz KIM." "K. Marx" railworkers' club. 132. 51 (1927).

A.1.32 Bashkir ASSR

Batraki "Siniiaia Bluza." "Comintern" railworkers' club. 111. 51 (1927).

Beloretsk. "Siniiaia Bluza." "K. Marx" club. 503. 74 (1928).

Krasnousol'skii. "Zhivaia Gazeta." Glass factory. 230. 53-54 (1927).

Sterlitamak. "Siniiaia Bluza." VLKSM club. 340. 63-64 (1927).

Ufa. "Siniiaia Bluza." "October Revolution" dam. 116. 51 (1927).

Ufa. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Dzherzhinskii" workers' club of wood mill no. 1. 210. 53-54 (1927).

Ufa. "Seraia Bluza." House of enlightenment workers. 496. 74 (1928).

Ufa. "Siniiaia Bluza." Club of the STS. 529. 76 (1928).

A.1.33 Chuvash ASSR

Cheboksary. "Siniiaia Bluza-Profsoiuznik." Trade union council. 352. 59-60 (1927).

A.1.34 Mari AO

Iurino. "Mezhsoiuznik." "Liebknecht" union club. 281. 55-56 (1927).

Kozmodem'iansk. "Siniiaia Bluza." Party-union club. 199. 53-54 (1927).

A.1.35 Mordovian ASSR

Ruzaevka. "Gaika." Railworkers' club. 544. 77 (1928).

A.1.36 Tatar ASSR

Agryz. "Kuznitsa." "Lenin" railworkers' club. 305. 55-56 (1927).

Bugul'ma. "Siniiaia Bluza." Union of Soviet tradeworkers. 172. 52 (1927).

Kazan'. "Siniiaia Bluza." Housing unit No. 44. 110. 51 (1927).

Kazan'. "Siniiaia Bluza." Club of medical workers. 394. 69-70 (1927).

Spasskii Zaton. "Siniiaia Bluza." Ship repairing factory. 113. 51 (1927).

A.1.37 Volga German ASSR

Fedorovka. "Smychka." Union club. 250. 53-54 (1927).

Krasnyi-Kut. "Spaika." "October Revolution" club. 11. 50 (1927).

A.2 RUSSIAN SFSR (NORTH CAUCASUS)

A.2.1 Don Region

Ilovskaiia. "Siniiaia Bluza." 417. 69-70 (1927).

Kisliakovskaia. "Spaika." 548. 77 (1928).

Kushchevka. "Siniiaia Bluza." Worker-peasant club. 499. 74 (1928).

Morozovskaia. "Regulator." Railworker's club. 104. 50 (1927).

Nakhichevan na Donu. "Gosh." "S.M. Makarov" secondary school. 368. 63-64 (1927).

Novocherkassk. "Siniiaia Bluza." 1st Secondary School. 89. 50 (1927).

Novocherkassk. "Postroika." Club of the union of construction workers. 449. 73 (1928).

Novominskaia. "Komsomol Eye." VLKSM cell. 7. 50 (1927).

Rostov na Donu. "Krasnaia Bluza." Club PSS and TS. 106. 50 (1927).

Rostov na Donu. "Maiak." Regional Committee. 114. 51 (1927).

Rostov na Donu. "Parovoz." Railworkers' club. 228. 53-54 (1927).

Rostov na Donu. "Shkol'nyi glaz." "Lunacharskii" school No. 1. 315. 57-58 (1927).

Rostov na Donu. "Komsostroi." 377. 65-66 (1927).

Rostov na Donu. "Siniiaia Bluza." 475. 73 (1928).

Rostov na Donu. "Oktiabr'." "Krupskaia" school of teenage workers. 506. 75 (1928).

Shakhty Okrug. "Golos Shakhtera. "3rd Internationale" mine. 219. 53-54 (1927).

Shakhty Okrug. "Chernaia Bluza." "Artem" club. 489. 74 (1928).

Slaviansk. "Shesterenka." Transport workers' club. 364. 63-64 (1927).

Taganrog. "Krasnyi luch." "March 8" club. 334. 63-64 (1927).

Taganrog. "Fal'tser." "Iuzefovich" leatherworkers' club. 431. nn (1927).

Taganrog. "Fakel." Club of the union of Soviet tradeworkers. 459. 73 (1928).

Taganrog. Children's living newspaper "Iunyi fakelets." Club of the union of Soviet tradeworkers. 460. 73 (1928).

Tatsinskaia. "Prosveshchenets." Secondary school. 439. nn (1927).

A.2.2 Krasnodar Region

Armavir. "Siniiaia Bluza." Industrial-economic technicum. 16. 50 (1927).

Armavir. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Lenin" school No. 3. 169. 52 (1927).

Ilanskaia. "Molot." 498. 74 (1928).

Kalitva. "Komsomolets." VLKSM. 186. 52 (1927).

Krasnodar. "Siniiaia Bluza." Club of the agricultural institute. 135. 51 (1927).

Krasnodar. "Sverdlovets." "Sverdlov" United workers' club of foodworkers and printers. 201. 53-54 (1927).

Krasnodar. "Kul'tura Vpered." Union of agricultural workers. 435. nn (1927.)

Krasnodar. "Drug Khleboroba." House of peasants. 520. 75 (1928).

Krasnodar. "Kombluza." "Path to communism" club of the STS. 550. 77 (1928).

Kropotkin. "Profsoiuznik." "Tomskii" workers' club. 365. 63-64 (1927).

Krylovskaiia. "Iskra." "Comintern" workers' club. 285. 55-56 (1927).

Krymenka. "Chernomorka." "Lenin" club. 296. 55-56 (1927).

Korenevskaiia. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Lozovskii" club. 168. 52 (1927).

Labinsk. "Komsomoliia." Youth section of the "Engels" central workers' club. 360. 61-62 (1927).

Labinsk. "Stroitel'." "Stalin" club of construction workers. 532. 76 (1928).

Lodozhskaia. "Siniia Bluza." Reading hut. 257. 55-56 (1927).

Novocherkassk. "Siniia Bluza." Railworkers' club. 383. 67-68 (1927).

Novo-Pokrovskaia. "Metla." Union of Soviet tradeworkers. 33. 50 (1927).

Novorossiisk. "Semafor." "Markov" club. 143. 52 (1927).

Novorossiisk. "Siniia Bluza." Club of the "Proleatriat" cement factory. 218. 53-54 (1927).

Novorossiisk. "Shtorm." Regional committee. 414. 69-70 (1927).

Novorossiisk. "Poryv." Black Sea technicum. 415. 69-70 (1927).

Pashkovskaia. "Izbach." Reading hut. 367. 63-64 (1927).

Pavlovskaia. "Siniia Bluza." "Lenin" secondary school. 56. 50 (1927).

Sochi. "Prozhektor." "Tomskii" club. 381. 65-66 (1927).

Sochi. "Metla." "Tomskii" club. 386. 67-68 (1927).

Sochi. "Shtorm." Club of national minorities. 440. nn (1927).

Timoshevsk. "Siniia Bluza." "Lenin" "Red railworker" club. 525. 76 (1928).

Ust'-Labinskaia. "Pokazatel'nyi kollektiv Siniia Bluza." Central reading hut. 32. 50 (1927).

Voronezhskaia. "Siniia Bluza." Workers' club and house of peasants. 141. 52 (1927).

Voznesenskaia. "Vakhta." Oilworkers' club of the "Artem" oilfield. 17. 50 (1927).

Vyselki. "Siniia Bluza." "Red October" club. 261. 55-56 (1927).

A.2.3 Stavropol' Region

Georgievsk. "Vpered." "Kalinin" central workers' club. 254. 55-56 (1927).

Georgievsk. "Smena." "Kalinin" central workers' club. 255. 55-56 (1927).

Georgievsk. "Krasnaia Bluza Leninets." Club of worker and peasant youths. 273. 55-56 (1927).

Izobil'no-Tishchenskii. "Sel'skii Rabotnik." "Lenin" club. 382. 65-66 (1927).

Mineral'nye Vody. "Krasnaia Bluza." "Frunze" club. 324. 57-58 (1927).

Moskovskoe. "Komar." Reading hut. 321. 57-58 (1927).

Nezlobnaia. "Tolchok Vpered." Club of the union of foodworkers. 61. 50 (1927).

Stavropol'. "Scythe." Regional trade union. 5. 50 (1927).

Stavropol'. "Rezets metallists." Metal workers' youth club. 317. 57-58 (1927).

Piatigorsk. "Na Smenu." Central club of the VLKSM. 21. 50 (1927).

Piatigorsk. "Piatigorskii Kommunal'nik." Club RKKh. 137. 51 (1927).

Piatigorsk. "Siniaia Bluza." Workers' club of four trade unions. 308. 55-56 (1927).

Piatigorsk. "Krasnaia Bluza." "Tomskii" club of the STS. 533. 76 (1928).

Suvorovskaia. "Krasnaia Bluza." Regional culture commission of the trade unions. 195. 53-54 (1927).

Vorontsovo-Aleksandrovskoe. "Siniaia Bluza." Regional committee club. 107. 51 (1927).

Vorontsovo-Aleksandrovskoe. "Siniaia Bluza." Regional committee club. 272. 55-56 (1927).

A.2.4 Abkhazian ASSR

Gagri. "Seraia Bluza." Local committee of Soviet tradeworkers. 115. 51 (1927).

Sukhum. "Siniaia Bluza." Cultural division of the Abkhazia SPS. 214. 53-54 (1927).

A.2.5 Dagestan ASSR

Derbent. "Siniaia Bluza-- Desiatyi Oktiabr'." Railworkers' club and railroad school. 436. nn (1927.)

Makhach-Kala. "Krasnyi Gorniak." "Red Proletariat" oil factory No. 8. 142. 52 (1927).

Petrovsk. "Dagestanskaia Siniiaia Bluza." "Kolyshkin" club. 433. nn (1927.)

A.2.6 Chechen AO

Groznyi. "Krasnaia Bluza Tiski." Railworkers' club. 10. 50 (1927).

A.2.7 Cherkess AO

Khaibrino-Khabl'. "Siniiaia Bluza." Union of Soviet tradeworkers. 345. 59-60 (1927).

A.2.8 North Osetian AO

Mozdok. "Teplovoz." 444. nn (1927).

Sadonskie mines. "Bur-Molot." Miners' club. 263. 55-56 (1927).

Vladikavkaz. "Gaika." Youth Section of the railworkers' club. 100. 50 (1927).

Vladikavkaz. "Gorniak." Club of the Union of miners. 215. 53-54 (1927).

Vladikavkaz. "Siniiaia Bluza-- Molot." "Lenin" united workers' club. 501. 74 (1928).

A.3 RUSSIAN SFSR (URALS)

A.3.1 Cheliabinsk Region

Cheliabinsk. "Sviaz'." Club of the union of communication workers. 236. 53-54 (1927).

Miass. "Domkrat." 84. 50 (1927).

Suleia. "Siniiaia Bluza." Partyworkers' club. 24. 50 (1927).

Zlatoust. "Gaika." Metalworkers' club of the Katav-Ivanovskii factory. 22. 50 (1927).

Zlatoust. "Siniiaia Bluza." Club of worker youth. 133. 51 (1927).

Zlatoust. "Siniiaia Bluza 'Metallist'." "October revolution" workers' club of the Kusinskii factory. 446. 73 (1928).

A.3.2 Kurgan Region

Iurgamysh. "Fakel." Agricultural technicum. 87. 50 (1927).

Kurgan. "Gaika." Trade union club. 362. 61-62 (1927).

A.3.3 Perm Region

Chaikovskoi. "Drezina." "Kalinin" club. 55. 50 (1927).

"Chermoz" Factory. "Siniiaia Bluza Metallist." Workers' club. 96. 50 (1927).

"Dobrianka" Factory. "Gudok Dobrianki" workers' club. 78. 50 (1927).

Gubakha (Kizelstroi). "Siniiaia Bluza." "Tomskii" workers' club. 34. 50 (1927).

Kungur. "Siniiaia Bluza." Club of the mechanical technicum. 27. 50 (1927).

Kizel. "Gudok." "Ashikhimin" railworkers' club. 117. 51 (1927).

Usol'skaia. "Siniiaia Bluza." "October Revolution" workers' club. 211. 53-54 (1927).

A.3.4 Sverdlovsk Region

Alapaevsk. "Krasnyi Prokatchik." "Metallist" workers' club. 36. 50 (1927).

Alapaevsk. "Syn Prokatchika." "Metallist" workers' club. 37. 50 (1927).

Bazhenovo. "Zador." "Red October" workers' club. 333. 63-64 (1927).

Goroblagodatskaia. "Krasnyi Transportnik." 97. 50 (1927).

Irbit. "Siniaia Bluza." "Tomskii" workers' club. 531. 76 (1928).

Krasnoufimsk. "Putevka." Ukhtomskii." workers' club. 161. 52 (1927).

Nizhnaia Salda. "Rupor-Profsoiuznika." Regional committee of Soviet tradeworkers. 422. 69-70 (1927).

Nizhne-Caldinskii Zavod. "Siniaia Bluza." Metalworkers' club. 190. 52 (1927).

Nizhnii Tagil. "Rupor Profsoiuznika." Club of Soviet tradeworkers. 28. 50 (1927).

Nizhnii Tagil. "Siniaia Bluza." Central metalworkers' club. 302. 55-56 (1927).

Sverdlovsk. "Siniaia Bluza." Cellulose factory. 123. 51 (1927).

Velikii Ufaleiskii Factory. "Siniaia Bluza." "Fokin" metalworkers' club. 124. 51 (1927).

A.4 RUSSIAN SFSR (SIBERIA)

A.4.1 Chita Region

Mogocha. "Siniaia Bluza." 83. 50 (1927).

Petrovskii Zavod Station. "Siniaia Bluza." "Zinov'ev" transportation workers' club. 146. 52 (1927).

Sretensk. "Krasnaia Rubakha." "Red October club of the STS. 543. 77 (1928).

A.4.2 Irkutsk Region

Irkutsk. "Rabochaia Bluza im. Marata." "Dzerzhinskii" club of the foodworkers' union. 53. 50 (1927).

Irkutsk. "Siniiaia Bluza." "October Revolution." Club of Soviet tradeworkers. 192. 52 (1927).

Kimil'tei. "Siniiaia Bluza." 401. 69-70 (1927).

Kirensk na Lene. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Lenin" workers' club. 477. 73 (1928).

"Sibfarfor" porcelain factory. "Siniiaia Bluza Sibfarfor." 416. 69-70 (1927).

A.4.3 Krasnoiarsk Region

Krasnoiarsk. "Seraia Bluza Novgorodtsev." Red army club. 369. 63-64 (1927).

A.4.4 Kurgan Region

Shadrin. "Krasnyi Oktiabr'." "Krasnyi Oktiabr'" Textile factory. 203. 53-54 (1927).

A.4.5 Novosibirsk Region

Barabinsk. "Siniiaia Bluza." Workers' club. 76. 50 (1927).

Kyshtovskoe. "Krasnaia Bluza." 517. 75 (1928).

Novosibirsk. "Molodoi Leninets." Club of the young Leninists. 157. 52 (1927).

Novosibirsk. "Siniiaia Bluza-- Molodniak." Regional insurance bureau. 357. 61-62 (1927).

Novosibirsk. "Siniiaia Bluza." Transport workers' club. 447. 73 (1928).

Novosibirsk. "Siniiaia Bluza." "May 1" club of Narpit. 469. 73 (1928).

Novosibirsk. "Zhezl." "Red policeman" club. 528. 76 (1928).

Tatarsk. "Siniiaia Bluza." Union club. 191. 52 (1927).

A.4.6 Omsk Region

Druzhino. "Siniiaia Bluza." "5th anniversary of the October Revolution." 332. 63-64 (1927).

Omsk. "Pritsel." "Frunze" garrison club. 404. 69-70 (1927).

A.4.7 Tiumen Region

Glubokaia. "U Stanka." Railworkers' club. 54. 50 (1927).

A.4.8 Tomsk Region

Rybinsk. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Lenin" fur factory no. 1. 194. 52 (1927).

A.4.9 Buriat-Mongol ASSR

Cherembass. "Siniiaia Bluza." Pit No. 2. 202. 53-54 (1927).

Shakhovskaia. "Siniiaia Bluza." Inter-union club. 507. 75 (1928).

Velikii Udinsk. "Krasnye pechatniki." Union of typographic workers. 252. 55-56 (1927).

A.4.10 Khakassk AO.

Chernogorskie ugol'nye kopi. "Gorniak." 516. 75 (1928).

Uzlovsiaia. "Krasnyi Galstuk." Railroad division of pioneers. 538. 77 (1928).

A.5 AZERBAIJAN SSR

Adzhikabul. "Gudok." "Batsek" Railworkers' club. 15. 50 (1927).

Baku. "Siniiaia Bluza." Labor Exchange." 214. 53-54 (1927).

Baku. "Krasnyi Galstuk." Club of the "Spartacus" 19th red army pioneer division. 227. 53-54 (1927).

Baku. "Shkol'nyi vzor." "May 1" primary school no. 33. 306. 55-56 (1927).

Baku. "Mazutnik." "Profintern" club. 481. 73 (1928).

Evlakh. "Sinebluzniki." 86. 50 (1927).

Khachmas. "Siniiaia Bluza." Railworkers' club. 391. 67-68 (1927).

A.6 BELORUSSIAN SSR

Bobruisk. "Fondational collective of the Blue Blouse." Party club. 2. 50 (1927).

Borisovskii Okrug. "Kul'turnyi Ostrovok." "Vorovskii" timber mill. 125. 51 (1927).

Cherven'. "Mododniak." Peoples' house. 508. 75 (1928).

Drissa. "Siniiaia Bluza." VLKSM. 542. 77 (1928).

Gomel'. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Lenin" party-union club. 182. 52 (1927).

Gomel'. "Siniiaia Bluza." Regional committee party club. 238. 53-54 (1927).

Minsk. "Kropilo." "Rosa Luxeburg" Polish workers' club. 179. 52 (1927).

Novobelitsa. "Siniiaia Bluza." Club of the "Vezuvii" factory. 348. 59-60 (1927).

Osipovich. "Signal." "Red October" club. 465. 73 (1928).

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Staro-Sirotino. "Rupor." VLKSM. 134. 51 (1927).

Vitebsk. "Krasnyi Luch." "October Revolution" club. 58. 50 (1927).

Zhlobin. "Siniiaia Bluza Chigunachnik." "10th anniversary of October" club. 505. 75 (1928).

A.7 GEORGIAN SSR

Tiflis. "Vintik." New workers' club. 29. 50 (1927).

Tiflis. "Krasnyi Chasovoi." Rifle Battalion "N". 40. 50 (1927).

Tiflis. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Medrabotnik" central workers' club. 68. 50 (1927).

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Tiflis. "Zhivaia gazeta DKAR." House of the Red army and fleet. 300. 55-56 (1927).

A.7.1 I. Ajarian ASSR

Batum. "Sinebluznyi Gorniak." "26 Commisars of Baku" club. 154. 52 (1927).

A.8 KAZAKH ASSR

Aline-Ata. "Siniaia Bluza." Railworkers' club. 60. 50 (1927).

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Dzhusal'y. "Siniaia Bluza." "Rudzutaka" club. 530. 76 (1928).

Kokchetav. "Dynamo." "Lenin" central workers' club. 165. 52 (1927).

Kustanai. "Siniaia Bluza." "Lenin" trade union club. 359. 61-62 (1927).

Sarygol'. "Siniaia Bluza." "May 1" club. 534. 76 (1928).

Spassk. "Siniaia Bluza." Pedagogical technicum. 450. 73 (1928).

Turkestan Station. "Rychag." "Shumilov" club. 130. 51 (1927).

Ural'sk. "Seraia Bluza." Secondary school No. 1. 174. 52 (1927).

Ural'sk. "Stroitel'." Union of construction workers. 474. 73 (1928).

Ust'kamenogorsk. "Siniaia Bluza." Trade union club. 378. 65-66 (1927).

A.9 KIRGIZ ASSR

Kyzyl-kiia. "Siniaia Bluza." Union of forge workers." 353. 59-60 (1927).

A.10 TAJIK ASSR

Dushanbe. "Siniiaia Bluza." Cultural division of the council of trade unions. 384. 67-68 (1927).

A.11 TURKMEN SSR

Krasnovodsk. "Siniiaia Bluza." Regional union bureau. 185. 52 (1927).

Leninsk-Chardzhi. "Krasnyi Stroitel'." Union of builders. 80. 50 (1927).

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Merv. "Siniiaia Bluza." Cotton factory No. 3. 336. 63-64 (1927).

A.12 UKRAINIAN SSR

Apostolovo. "Siniiaia Bluza." "7th anniversary of the October revolution" club. 488. 74 (1928).

Bakhmach. "Siniiaia Bluza im. 1 Maia." Railworkers' club. 35. 50 (1927).

Bakhmach-Tovari. "Il'ichata." Pioneer squad. 432. nn (1927.)

Belaia Tserkov'. "Rupor Pishevika." "Pishevkus" workers' club. 341. 59-60 (1927).

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Berdiansk. "Postroika." Construction workers' club. 299. 55-56 (1927).

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Dnepropetrovsk. "Prozhektor." 38th labor school. 547. 77 (1928).

Dolgintsevo. "Siniaia Bluza." Youth section of the railworkers' club. 14. 50 (1927).

Fastov. "Siniaia Bluza." Railworkers' club. 150. 52 (1927).

Glukhov. "Komsomolia." United club. 423. 69-70 (1927).

Il'intsy. "Siniaia Bluza." Inter-union club. 497. 74 (1928).

Kamenskoe. "Siniaia Bluza." "Liebknecht" metalworkers' club. 23. (1927).

Kharkiv. "Metallist." "Metallist" central workers' club. 223. 53-54 (1927).

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Konotop. "Molodoi transportnik." Railworkers' club. 310. 55-56 (1927).

Korosten'. "Gudok Komsomol'tsa." VLKSM. 47. 50 (1927).

Kremenchug. "Semafor." "Lenin" railworkers' club. 155. 52 (1927).

Krivoi Rog. "Kirpichniki." United club of builders and foodworkers. 239. 53-54 (1927).

Kupiansk. "Siniaia Bluza." Workers' club. 407. 69-70 (1927).

Kyiv. "Krasnaia Metla." October hospital. 376. 65-66 (1927).

Kyiv. "Gudok agitbazy." 403. 69-70 (1927).

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Kyiv. "Kurs-ekran." State foreign language courses. 494. 74 (1928).

Maranets. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Comintern" mine. 233. 53-54 (1927).

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Mariupol'. "Siniiaia Bluza." Professional-technical school. 284. 55-56 (1927).

Melitopol'. "Siniiaia Bluza." "Lenin" central party workers' club. 8. 50 (1927).

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Melitopol'. "Siniiaia Bluza." Central party workers' club. 241. 53-54 (1927).

Mikhailovka. "Siniiaia Bluza." Village building. 338. 63-64 (1927).

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Motovilovka. "Krasnaia pila." Saw mill Iu.Z.A. 380. 65-66 (1927).

Nezhin. "Komsomol." Railworkers' union. 30. 50 (1927).

Nezhin. "Start." Council for physical culture. 67. 50 (1927).

Nezhin. "Seraia bluza." "Lenin" union club. 297. 55-56 (1927).

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Odessa. "Motor." Club of the "Zlatopol'skii" tram workers. 309. 55-56 (1927).

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Pavlograd. "Siniaia Bluza." Central workers' club. 167. 52 (1927).

Pologi. "Kubalda." 85. 50 (1927).

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Pologi. "Parovoznye Begunki." Youth section of the "Lunacharskii" workers' club. 312. 55-56 (1927).

Poltava. "Siniaia Bluza." Club of the union of Soviet tradeworkers. 262. 55-56 (1927).

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Proskurov. "Siniaia Bluza." Central workers' club. 90. 50 (1927).

Proskurov. "Krasnaia zvezda." Club of the red Cossacks brigade. 318. 57-58 (1927).

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Rechitsa. "Dneprovets. "Marx" club of the "Dnepr" state match factory. 331. 63-64 (1927).

Sinel'nikovo. "Priboi." "Lozovskii" club. 183. 52 (1927).

Shostka. "Siniaia Bluza." Workers' club of the union of chemists. 465. 73 (1928).

Tarashcha. "Smychka." Village building. 290. 55-56 (1927).

Uzlovaia. "Siniaia Bluza." "10th anniversary of October" club. 473. 73 (1928).

Verkhnedneprovsk. "Siniaia Bluza." Palace of labor, international culture comission. 74. 50 (1927).

Vinnitsa. "Roiter Shtral." Club of worker youth. 442. nn (1927).

Volchansk. "Smychka." Party-union club. 158. 52 (1927).

Volkovintsy. "Chervona Zora." Regional secretariat of trade unions. 178. 52 (1927).

Volossko-Balakleevka. "Siniaia Bluza." Villiage house. 73. 50 (1927).

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A.12.1 Donbas

Avdeevka. "Siniia Bluza." "October Revolution" workers' club. 187. 52 (1927).

Bokovo-Antratsitovsk. "Siniia Bluza." Central workers' club. 389. 67-68 (1927).

Budenovka. "Zaboishchik." Club of shafts 11-21. 375. 65-66 (1927).

Budenovskii kust. "Gorniak." Mine no. 9. 198. 53-54 (1927).

Debal'tsevo. "Strela." Mechanical factory. 237. 53-54 (1927).

Krindachevka. "Chernaia Bluza." "Paris Commune" club of mine 4. 483. 73 (1928).

Krinadchevskoe. Shakhterka Donbassa." Shaft no. 6. 526. 76 (1928).

Lugansk region. "Shakhterskoe svetilo." K. Eremenko mine. 242. 53-54 (1927).

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Nasvetevicevo. "Zapal'shchik." "Kuriachii" club of the "Titov" mine. 147. 52 (1927).

"New York" Commune. "Rodchenko" workers' club. 31. 50 (1927).

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Rutchenovskii Mine. "Shakhterka." "Artem" workers' club, shaft no. 30. 344. 59-60 (1927).

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A.12.2 Crimean ASSR

Alushta. "Golubaia Bluza." Inter-union club. 350. 59-60 (1927).

Evpatoria. "Siniaia Bluza." Club of the union of Soviet tradeworkers. 545. 77 (1928).

Ialta. "Krasnaia Bluza." "Profintern" club. 138. 52 (1927).

Kerch. "Natsmen." Club of national minorities. 280. 55-56 (1927).

Sevastopol'. "Polundra." "Comintern" cruiser 1st class. 441. nn (1927).

A.12.3 Moldavian ASSR

Balta. "Molot." Central worker's club. 77. 50 (1927).

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A.13 UZBEK SSR

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Novyi zritel'

Pravda

Rabochii klub (later *Robichyi klub*) (Kharkiv)

Rabochii zritel'

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