



Number 2201

ISSN: 2163-839X (online)

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## **Having Fun in the Thaw:**

Youth Initiative Clubs in the Post-Stalin Years



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## Abstract

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This essay explores a novel cultural institution of the Thaw, youth initiative clubs. Created in 1956, these clubs offered young people an opportunity to take a leading role in organizing and managing cultural activities at the grassroots level. These new organizations emblemized what the author argues represented a major shift by the Thaw-era authorities to inspiring youth initiative from below as a means of forging a post-Stalinist model of young citizens characterized by enthusiasm and autonomy and thus seen as capable of taking charge over building communism. At the same time, the Soviet leadership intended youth initiative clubs to increase social control by getting young people into official cultural collectives. A close investigation of the youth initiative club movement reveals that these diverse goals bred some tensions at the ground level. Young club activists, empowered by top-level calls for popular initiative, struggled to overcome the opposition of certain entrenched bureaucrats who refused to discard the Stalinist emphasis on obedience and discipline. In other cases, club members pursued activities that departed from the intentions of the Kremlin itself. Nonetheless, the essay finds that many young people found friends, emotional support, a source of meaning, and a great deal of fun within youth initiative clubs. The author therefore shows that official Soviet collectives were not invariably repressive institutions that minimized individual autonomy, but could instead provide significant opportunities for popular agency, grassroots organization, and pleasurable entertainment, illustrating concordances between the Soviet population and the government.

Gleb Tsipursky

## Having Fun in the Thaw: Youth Initiative Clubs in the Post-Stalin Years

Starting in the mid-1950s, the Soviet leadership placed a great deal of emphasis on inspiring youth initiative from below. A. N. Shelepin, the first secretary of the Komsomol, expressed this goal in his speech at the 1956 Twentieth Communist Party Congress—where N. S. Khrushchev famously denounced Stalin.<sup>1</sup> Shelepin repeatedly stressed the “serious” problem of Komsomol cells relying on “bureaucratic methods,” without bringing anything “new and interesting” to their work, which “cannot satisfy youth.” To deal with this, he proclaimed that the Komsomol Central Committee (Tsentral’nyi Komitet, hereafter TsK) wanted to “achieve the broad development of initiative and grassroots activism.”<sup>2</sup> This essay empirically grounds the discursive shift toward favoring youth initiative by examining one concrete measure taken by the Komsomol to advance this goal: the creation of youth initiative clubs (*molodezhnye initsiativnye kluby*). An investigation of this novel institutional form, in turn, helps explain the nature of the Thaw, the period following Stalin's death in 1953, spanning Khrushchev's years of rule, and ending in the late 1960s.<sup>3</sup>

Work with youth constituted a basic element of party policy due to the key role of young people in communist ideology.<sup>4</sup> Simultaneously, the large proportion of youth in the Soviet Union during those years, due to massive World War II casualties, made their successful social integration particularly crucial.<sup>5</sup> Scholars have shed some light on young people in the USSR during the postwar Stalin years and the Thaw—in particular those who engaged in alternative cultural practices<sup>6</sup> and deviated from established political norms—as well as on the education and politics of university students.<sup>7</sup> An investigation of youth initiative clubs contributes to this literature by examining the leisure-time cultural activities of the mass of ordinary urban youth who did not explicitly transgress social, political, and moral boundaries. At the same time, since these clubs counted both students and

young urban workers as members, my research expands the demographic scope of extant historical analysis.

In official Soviet discourse, youth initiative clubs fell into the category of *kul'turno-massovaia rabota*, which I define as state-sponsored popular culture.<sup>8</sup> This field consisted of various free-time activities, such as music, theater, and dancing, with mass amateur participation, all sponsored by the Party-state complex, either through the government or party-managed social organizations such as trade unions. Together, they provided the key public spaces and resources for entertainment, socializing, play, relaxation, and romance—crucial sites of everyday life for the population. Despite this, we have few in-depth, academically rigorous, archive-based examinations of this sphere in the postwar decades.<sup>9</sup> The current article expands the boundaries of scholarly knowledge on this important but understudied issue.

A case study of youth initiative clubs also contributes to ongoing debates about the nature of the Thaw. The traditional historiographic paradigm emphasized Stalin's death as a monumental break for the USSR that brought about a generally more pluralistic, tolerant period in Soviet history. It highlighted the importance of conflicts in the Thaw between reformists who wanted to change Stalin-era policies, and those conservatives who wanted to maintain existing precedents, suggesting that this conflict constituted the basic tension in Thaw-era society.<sup>10</sup> Some later scholars, however, have cast doubt on these postulates. In a well-known work that strove to refute Thaw-era pluralism and tolerance, Oleg Kharkhordin argued that under Khrushchev, official Soviet collectives grew more powerful and repressive. They intervened in people's lives to impose stringent social controls on a massive scale, minimizing individual autonomy. This horizontal social control resulted in a higher degree of surveillance and oppression than Stalin's hierarchical policing and made everyday life more difficult for the population, while the internal life of these collectives was characterized by cynical strife.<sup>11</sup> Kharkhordin and others pointed instead to unofficial groups of friends who provided emotional and material support and served as the actual source of meaning and self-definition in post-Stalin Soviet society.<sup>12</sup> Other scholars, most notably Juliane Fürst, have questioned the attention given to 1953 as a monumental break in Soviet history and see strong continuities between the

period from 1945 to 1953 and the subsequent decades, while still acknowledging the transformative impact of Stalin's death on some areas of Soviet life. This approach roots many of the Thaw-era innovations in the postwar Stalin era, positing that they came to fruition in the mid-1950s as a result of broader processes such as the completion of postwar reconstruction, and less due to policy shifts resulting from the ascendance of a new leadership.<sup>13</sup> Such research indicates the need for more thorough investigation of both official discourse and actual practice before and after 1953 in order to ascertain what changed and what remained the same. Finally, some have expressed skepticism of the significance given by the traditional paradigm to the reformist versus conservative contest as the fundamental analytical tool in explaining the history of the Thaw. Most prominently, Stephen Bittner de-emphasizes this struggle due to what he sees as the lack of clear battle lines and cohesive factions and instead puts the spotlight on generational conflict as central to explaining developments in this era.<sup>14</sup> Miriam Dobson also rejects the idea of two fixed camps of conservatives and reformers, arguing that in most cases, Soviet citizens agreed with some aspects of the post-Stalin reforms and disagreed with others.<sup>15</sup> All these works have served as a necessary corrective to the all-encompassing assumptions of the traditional paradigm, leading to a transformation in our understanding of the nature and meaning of the Thaw.

My investigation helps improve our comprehension of the complex, multifaceted nature of the post-Stalin years by drawing on both the traditional paradigm and some newer research to present a vigorous analysis of youth initiative clubs. In the process, I weigh in on all three areas of contention. My work contributes to our understanding of the breaks associated with the change in the Kremlin, as demonstrated by a shift in official emphasis to encourage more youth initiative from below rather than disciplined obedience to orders from above. Youth initiative clubs embody this development in the everyday life experience of state-sponsored popular culture. At the same time, I find certain underlying continuities that date back to tensions during the NEP years, 1922–28, and even earlier within the Bolshevik Party. These debates centered on the degree to which young people, and the masses more broadly, should be allowed to undertake spontaneous, autonomous activities,

as opposed to maintaining strict adherence to the precepts of an ideologically conscious vanguard in the leadership. The latter view predominated in the postwar Stalin years. By setting the advocacy of grassroots youth initiative by the post-Stalin leadership in the context of earlier tensions, this article indicates the need to go beyond a conservative-reformist binary and consider these debates as reflecting long-term fractures within the Soviet system. Finally, although the youth initiative clubs were state-sponsored popular culture collectives that meant to increase social control over young people, they hardly resulted in more oppression or cynical internal strife. Instead, young people found meaning, emotional support, and friendship. Furthermore, far from decreasing autonomy, these clubs intensified youth agency, meaning self-willed activities that reflected the interests of young people. They helped their members create their own entertainment, indicating the success of young Soviet citizens in shaping their environment in minute ways to fit their desires.<sup>16</sup>

This article draws on a database of official sources—archives, newspapers, instruction booklets—and personal sources, including interviews and memoirs.<sup>17</sup> These sources deal primarily with the youth initiative club campaign in urban settings within Soviet Russia, as opposed to either rural regions or the non-Russian republics.

## **Youth Initiative**

The post-Stalin turn toward youth initiative dates back to discussions taking place within the prerevolutionary Bolshevik Party, expressed in the historiography as the spontaneity-consciousness paradigm. Numerous debates took place within the party over the relationship between revolutionaries and workers. One view was that the worker masses possessed an unenlightened dissatisfaction resulting in spontaneous, misguided, rebellious actions, and thus required strong leadership by a small, ideologically conscious vanguard of revolutionaries and a minority of enlightened workers. Alternatively, the worker masses did have an instinctive, spontaneous understanding of their place in society due to their class position and therefore inevitably undertook the correct revolutionary actions. The latter view, which implied that professional revolutionaries should trust in the worker masses, predominated

in the party during periods of worker activism. The former won out when the Bolsheviks despaired over perceived worker apathy.<sup>18</sup>

Both of these tropes influenced the Bolshevik Party's approach once it gained power, as expressed in NEP-era debates over the best path to reach the ideal communist future. In the context of the relatively pluralistic, open environment of NEP, two distinct positions coalesced on the appropriate way of managing society and building communism. They expressed contrasting views of the relationship between the party and the populace, similar to the prerevolutionary disputes. The ideologically militant Left favored a rapid and coercive transition to communism, led by an ideologically conscious vanguard that forcefully shaped the population into model communists, New Soviet People; the more tolerant, pluralistic Right supported a slower, gradual path to the same "bright socialist future," one that relied more heavily on persuasion than coercion, striving for broad-based support and trusting in what they perceived as the natural inclinations of the populace toward communism. These contrasting approaches found their political embodiment in the Right and Left party factions—loose, diverse associations driven by both ideology and power politics, rather than fixed, static camps. Indeed, though some officials consistently favored either pluralistic and tolerant or coercive and militant policies, many were closer to the center of the political-ideological spectrum. They favored one or the other approach and faction based on shifting conditions and their tactical needs in competitions for power. These factions evolved over time in response to external and internal developments, though maintaining a basic difference between a militant and orthodox versus a pluralistic and tolerant approach to constructing communism and enacting government policy.<sup>19</sup>

Such debates had a particularly striking impact on NEP-era policy toward young people. Those on the Left believed young people should obey directives from the "ideologically conscious vanguard"—the party leaders. They could mobilize only in response to initiatives coming from the top and needed to direct all their youthful energy at advancing the cause of what the top-level officials defined as the path to communism. Furthermore, the Komsomol had to subordinate itself fully to the party hierarchy and not exhibit any autonomous behavior. The Right, however, wanted more space

for organized youth activities less explicitly aimed at constructing communism and encouraged greater youth autonomy. This included a stronger Komsomol that more directly served and represented youth interests within the Party-state. By the late 1920s, the Left position had triumphed. After the tumult of the Cultural Revolution, from the mid-1930s youth were exhorted to exhibit discipline, mobilizing only in response to top-level initiatives, staying passive otherwise and not disrupting social stability. Strictly subordinated to the party, the Komsomol had little opportunity to provide activities for young people that could be perceived as encouraging youth autonomy, regardless of youth desires.<sup>20</sup>

This youth policy continued after World War II. During the war itself, youth who did not enlist experienced a greater degree of independence. The Party-state, focused on its military efforts, loosened previous controls and encouraged citizens to take more autonomous actions aimed at participating in the war effort. In the immediate postwar months, some high-level internal policy discussions proposed allowing the population to organize more autonomous activities and elicit greater popular participation in governance. However, the clique that came to power in 1947–48 promoted a more militant approach, resulting in a decisive turn toward discipline and tight control from above, along with promotion of political-ideological propaganda as a solution to all social ills.<sup>21</sup>

This militant emphasis on discipline and strict obedience to the hierarchy expressed itself clearly in official discourse on young people. References to initiative and youth autonomy were rare, and the calls to express discipline proved a particularly favored trope in depicting idealized young people in this period. A 1952 Komsomol TsK Plenum decree on higher education declared that students who belong to the Komsomol, besides “showing a conscious attitude to studying,” also need to “be disciplined, seek to increase [their] political and cultural level, and participate actively in social life.”<sup>22</sup> So, after first exhorting them to study, the decree explicitly demands discipline, followed by political and cultural education; social activism is the last and, given the structuring of such Soviet official documents, the least important. Particularly relevant to youth initiative clubs, the major statement regarding state-sponsored popular culture in the years between the 1948 Congress and



Stalin's death—a decree on cultural recreation from the Fourth Plenum of the Komsomol TsK in August 1950—did not comment on the need for more initiative.<sup>23</sup> Speeches by the Komsomol secretaries of regional and local Komsomol cells reveal few or no references to the need to intensify initiative from below.<sup>24</sup>

The few references to youth autonomy and initiative usually appeared in the context of discipline and management from above. For example, the final resolution of the 1949 Eleventh Komsomol Congress called for regional and republic Komsomol organizations to “increase the level of organizational-political work in the Komsomol, ensure concrete everyday political management of primary-level Komsomol cells, developing their grassroots activism [*aktivnost' i samodeiatel'nost'*].” It highlighted the need to “increase the initiative and activeness of Komsomol members, raise their organizational level and discipline.”<sup>25</sup> The 1952 Saratov city Komsomol conference, after emphasizing the need for stronger, closer, and more intense management by the city Komsomol committee as described above, commented on the question of activism from below. It required the city Komsomol committee to “in all ways develop the grassroots activism of primary Komsomol organizations, ensure the qualified and competent management of district and lower-level Komsomol organizations and groups, strengthen Komsomol discipline,” and so forth.<sup>26</sup>

The Komsomol's national organ published an article in December 1951 entitled “Develop Youth Initiative,” examining the city of Melikess in Ulianovsk region. Saying that “the party organizations of our city direct and control the everyday work of Komsomol organizations, getting deeply and intensely involved in their daily life,” the article expressed concern over youth upbringing after a recent party city conference on the matter. The party committee of a flax preparation enterprise had decided to activate its Komsomol cell. Before the party's intervention, the cell “barely showed life,” but with the party committee's deep, pervasive, and continuous attention, “conferences are now held regularly, discipline has improved,” and many enterprise youth joined the Komsomol. The article does note, though, that local party cells should not micromanage the Komsomol cells they oversee, not doing things like setting agendas for Komsomol meetings; they should

intervene only when the Komsomol gets off track.<sup>27</sup> Overall, in stressing the central role that party committees needed to play in managing Komsomol committees and praising “direct control over the everyday work of Komsomol organizations,” this article demonstrates that Komsomol cells had no legitimate space in official discourse to pursue activities that did not closely follow the demands of local party committees.

In the same spirit, the first point of the final resolution of the 1952 Saratov city Komsomol conference censured the city Komsomol committee for “not always directing the district and primary Komsomol committees in a specific, differentiated manner” and “rarely visiting primary Komsomol organizations, not giving them enough practical help.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, the praise for more intense management from above applied not only to the party in relation to the Komsomol but also in relation to higher and lower levels of the Komsomol hierarchy itself—with the lack of such management a cause for criticism from below. Other Komsomol conferences similarly demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of criticism on the question of leadership ensued from an insufficient level of instructions and guidance from above as opposed to excessive, overbearing management.<sup>29</sup> This mirrored the dynamic of the campaign for criticism and self-criticism of the late postwar Stalin years. This drive had very limited boundaries and targets of criticism, which permitted a minimum scope for autonomous activism from below, and the likelihood of severe punishment for those going beyond the borders.<sup>30</sup>

These Komsomol policy statements highlight usage of the term *initiative* in the official discourse of the later postwar Stalin years. It referred not to soliciting youth autonomy and agency from below, but encouraging activities directed closely by the “qualified and competent management” of higher-level Komsomol committees. In exhibiting “grassroots activism,” primary Komsomol cells and Komsomol members had to respond explicitly to directives from above, showing discipline and obedience to higher-ups. Censure of those above on the question of leadership was accepted as legitimate in those cases when higher-ups did not provide enough direction, as opposed to too much. The Soviet leadership instead tended to express suspicion of grassroots activism showed hints of youth autonomy from the guidance of party officials.

This finding concurs with research by Anna Krylova positing that the primary goal of the Stalinist party leadership was to prepare the country, and especially its youth, for war, thus requiring disciplined behavior.<sup>31</sup> The authorities also ramped up the cult of personality, stridently demanding that the population, both adults and youth, show extreme gratitude to the leader personally for any improvement in living conditions as well as for victory over the Nazis, as opposed to crediting their individual initiatives.<sup>32</sup> The antic cosmopolitan campaign, targeting "Western" influence while covertly aiming at Jews, as well as promoting Soviet and particularly Russian nationalism, reached its apogee in 1948 and made a substantial contribution to the ideologically militant, obedience-oriented atmosphere.<sup>33</sup> It had a particularly outsized impact on the everyday life of youth in state-sponsored popular culture events as well as in university classrooms.<sup>34</sup> Researchers on children in the postwar Stalinist years find a similar focus on discipline.<sup>35</sup>

The Party-state's rhetoric on youth initiative showed changes already by the Twelfth Komsomol Congress, held in March 1954, about a year after Stalin's death. Its resolution underlined the importance of the "development of criticism and self-criticism, especially from below, the strengthening of Komsomol members' control over the activities of Komsomol organs, the escalation of activeness by Komsomol members."<sup>36</sup> Here, the accent lies on democratic, voluntary initiative from below, by active Komsomol members who criticize and impose control over Komsomol organs. Nonetheless, the Komsomol leadership's relatively mild language in the immediate post-Stalin years and a lack of relevant policies or substantial changes to the Komsomol's bylaws (*ustav*) did not impel much work on developing youth initiative by lower-level Komsomol committees.<sup>37</sup>

The years between the Twelfth Komsomol Congress and the Twentieth Party Congress, when Khrushchev rose to sole power, resulted in a much intensified rhetoric on youth initiative and grassroots creativity by 1956. Shelepin's public speech at the congress reflected a harsh indictment of Komsomol methods that appeared in an internal report from the Komsomol TsK to the party TsK in late January 1956, less than a month before the party congress. The main problem of Komsomol work, according to the report, was a lack of interesting activities caused by excessive formalism, bureaucracy,

and a failure to consider the interests of young people. This resulted in “a significant portion of Komsomol members separating from the Komsomol and finding an outlet for their initiative, occasionally, in unseemly activities.” The document states that grassroots creativity “in Lenin's understanding, needs to ensure the active participation of each activist, each Komsomol member,” yet in some places, this is “restrained.” Moreover, the principle of democratic centralism “is currently violated, with the main emphasis on centralism, undermining the democratic, grassroots character of the Komsomol.” These violations included administrative, bureaucratic methods such as “an emphasis not on using persuasion, but on demanding uncontested implementation of the decisions of higher Komsomol organs” by primary Komsomol cells. To deal with such issues, the report proposed a “perestroika, directed at . . . decisive development of initiative and grassroots creativity by the wide mass of Komsomol members, an increase of their responsibility for the fate of their organization.” It called for substantial changes to the Komsomol's by-laws aimed toward shifting authority to lower-level Komsomol organizations. The TsK emphasized grassroots initiative and activeness on the part of individual Komsomol members and insisted on a general transition to more reliance on volunteerism and enthusiasm instead of on paid officials.<sup>38</sup> Such extensive emphasis on youth initiative found clear reflections in regional Komsomol conferences.<sup>39</sup>

The party TsK's approval of the Komsomol leadership's plans is underscored by the Komsomol TsK's passing a series of resolutions in the next few years implementing the suggested changes. For example, in the summer of 1957 a decree called for primary Komsomol cell organizational activities, in enterprises that have fewer than four hundred people in industry or nine hundred individuals in educational establishments to, as a rule, not be done by secretaries freed from their regular jobs. Thus, the secretaries would be putting in after-work, volunteer hours for Komsomol cell events.<sup>40</sup> In early 1958, the Komsomol TsK changed the organization's by-laws, adding that “one of the most important principles of Komsomol work is initiative and grassroots creativity of all its members and organizations,” which provided more power to lower-level organizations and individual members.<sup>41</sup> Even before the 1956 report, the Komsomol TsK took measures to promote such

initiative: in September 1955, a decentralizing resolution consciously lowered the Komsomol TsK's power by decreasing the number of *nomenklatura* positions that needed its approval.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, Komsomol advice literature unambiguously stated that the path to promotion lay through exhibiting initiative: “if you will demonstrate initiative and humaneness, and be a good organizer and a caring comrade, you will probably be selected into the ruling Komsomol organs more than once.”<sup>43</sup>

The Komsomol TsK linked the focus on youth initiative and grassroots creativity to the renewed drive of the post-Stalin leadership to achieve communism, especially by increasing popular participation in governance.<sup>44</sup> Illustrating the focus on initiative and its link to communist construction, Shelepin's keynote speech at the 1958 Fourteenth Komsomol Congress devoted a whole section to the topic. He proclaimed that “the party teaches us that as we move toward communism, the functions of the government will increasingly shift, and the role of the party and social organizations such as the Komsomol in life will grow progressively.” He also praised the Komsomol's work to counter the problems caused by the “cult of personality” and underlined the effectiveness of the measures aimed at decentralization and at lowering the number of paid officials, claiming that the Komsomol bureaucracy had decreased by over fifteen percent.<sup>45</sup> Khrushchev also gave a major speech at the congress, saying “the Komsomol is increasingly becoming an organization which is instilling in youth an ability to live in a communist society and manage its activities. What is needed for this? A wider development of grassroots creativity.”<sup>46</sup> Though forging enthusiastic, activist communists was the major motivation for the focus on youth initiative in official discourse, reducing administrative expenses was also important, freeing material resources for other aspects of communist construction. Indeed, the Komsomol TsK, explicitly linked its resolution on staffing reduction to the party leadership's intent: the mistaken tendency toward an increase in paid cadres “does not fit the spirit of the Komsomol as a grassroots, initiative organization, and contradicts the Party's directions on decreasing the amount, and the cost, of the bureaucracy.”<sup>47</sup>

Such evidence indicates a transformation in the image of the young New Soviet Person, from a disciplined soldier-worker obeying top-down directives

to an empowered young citizen demonstrating initiative in finding innovative ways to contribute to the broader societal progress toward communism. In effect, the Thaw witnessed a transition in the semiotics associated with the term *initiative*, from its postwar Stalinist meaning of heavily circumscribed activism directly responding to top-down directives, to the empowerment of grassroots activism and a search for more innovative and autonomous forms of Komsomol work from below. This development constituted part of a broader demilitarization of society and a shift to peacetime interests in the Thaw, coupled with a campaign focusing on transforming everyday life as a means of reaching the goal of the “bright socialist future.”<sup>48</sup> Research also indicates increased space for initiative by children in the Thaw.<sup>49</sup>

This change in rhetoric and policy intersected with another shift in the Thaw highlighting the importance of providing more interesting and engaging state-sponsored popular culture, especially for youth.<sup>50</sup> For example, in the keynote speech at the 1949 Komsomol Congress, state-sponsored popular culture received less than half a page of printed text and praised accomplishments.<sup>51</sup> In contrast, at the 1954 Komsomol Congress, Shelepin’s keynote speech, of about the same total length, discussed government-funded, state-sponsored popular culture for over two pages, and expressed criticism of ongoing work.<sup>52</sup> The post-Stalin administration also provided substantially more leisure time to the population, especially youth.<sup>53</sup> In discussing both the provision of more events and more free time, official rhetoric underlined the need to satisfy youth desires and was meant to make youth feel grateful to the party.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, the Komsomol TsK strongly and publicly linked the existence of youth labeled as deviants, hooligans, and *stiliagi*<sup>55</sup> with the lack of state-sponsored cultural recreation—a break with late Stalinist practices.<sup>56</sup> In an unprecedented closed letter aimed at expunging “amoral” behavior, sent in August 1955 to all Komsomol cells, the Komsomol TsK demanded that all Komsomol organizations actively organize popular culture events for young people as a means of preventing “deviant” behavior.<sup>57</sup>

The rhetorical emphasis on organized youth cultural recreation led directly to substantial increases in government-managed popular cultural events for young people. Cultural recreation institutions called clubs provided the space and equipment for cultural events and paid club workers who

organized such activities.<sup>58</sup> In cities, the clubs belonged for the most part to trade unions, but also a variety of other institutions, such as the Ministry of Culture, city and district party organizations, higher education establishments, and so forth. They ranged from massive, wealthy establishments, frequently called Palaces of Culture or Houses of Culture; to smaller, typically one-story buildings of a few rooms with a hall, referred to simply as clubs; to resource-strapped, one-room “red corners” (*krasnye ugolki*) in dormitories, factory shops, and large apartment buildings.<sup>59</sup> In the post-Stalin period, youth newspapers began to pay increasing attention to clubs, and publishing houses produced mounds of instructional literature for club workers.<sup>60</sup> Internal Komsomol reports demonstrate increased investments in clubs, many of them renovated or newly built, while youth newspapers exhorted Komsomol members to assist club construction.<sup>61</sup>

The clubs held many youth-oriented events, most notably youth evenings. “Evenings” (*vechera*) were events with varying purposes, such as honoring the best workers, meeting with election candidates, celebrating communist holidays, or giving an amateur concert. They generally had two parts. The first, more politically-oriented and formal, usually involved a lecture, speech, or ceremony. The second, more entertaining part, often began with a concert, followed by dancing late into the night. “Youth evenings” (*molodezhnye vechera*) were evenings explicitly aimed at youth, with tickets given out to young people instead of adults and local Komsomol cell(s) frequently heavily involved in organizing them.

A range of evidence illustrates the shift in emphasis from the late Stalin years to the Thaw regarding the provision of substantially more cultural activities for the masses and for young people in particular. In a case in point, the Moscow Gor’kii House of Culture had ten youth evenings in 1950, a third of the total evenings that year, with the rest largely dedicated to revolutionary dates and elections.<sup>62</sup> In the period from October 1955 to October 1956, it listed sixty-three evenings devoted to young people, a whopping 69 percent of the ninety-one evenings during this time, and over six times the number of youth-oriented evenings in 1950.<sup>63</sup> An oversight institution, the Moscow Krasnopresnenskii district’s cultural-enlightenment department, already in October 1953 specifically criticized the “lack of thematic evenings for youth,

not satisfying their desire” in the club of the city bus transport system, not something for which the department censured clubs in previous years.<sup>64</sup> The increased opportunities for young people are equally visible in amateur art circles. In these official collectives, clubs and other cultural recreation institutions provided equipment, space, and instruction in various arts, such as music, theater, dance, painting, poetry, and so on. According to a report sent to the Komsomol First Secretary Mikhailov, the USSR had over four million participants in two hundred thousand amateur arts collectives in 1950.<sup>65</sup> By 1954, around three hundred fifty thousand amateur arts collectives had five million people, a growth of one million members.<sup>66</sup> However, the number of people involved in amateur arts increased much faster after that, reaching nine million participants in six hundred thousand collectives by 1962, and according to the first secretary of the Komsomol at the time S. P. Pavlov, “most of them are young people.”<sup>67</sup> Indeed, at the 1957 Seventh Komsomol TsK Plenum, Shelepin drew attention to what he called “the correctness of the Komsomol's turn” after its 1954 Twelfth Congress, and especially the Twentieth Party Congress, to more active participation in cultural construction—underlining the change from the postwar Stalin years and pointing to the quite intentional shift in cultural policy.<sup>68</sup>

## **Youth Initiative Clubs**

Although opportunities for youth participation in cultural activities had increased, ongoing problems with the clubs owned by trade unions and other institutions resulted in the Komsomol TsK calling in 1956 for the establishment of a series of autonomous cultural recreation collectives under the purview of the Komsomol itself. Specifically, the Komsomol TsK complained that Komsomol organizations “are deprived of the possibility to use trade-union clubs for youth work, because they have been transformed into commercial organizations, showing movies day and night.”<sup>69</sup> It requested that the party reduce the obligatory movie days in the club plans, and the party TsK did so: yet, since it left the financial plan unchanged, the clubs still spent much of their time showing movies.<sup>70</sup> Accordingly, the 1956 internal report by the Komsomol TsK stated that Komsomol committees need to



“seriously take up the organization of youth evenings,” exemplifying the Komsomol TsK’s intent for the Komsomol to take ownership over state-sponsored popular culture targeted at young people.<sup>71</sup> Shelepin, in demanding the “development of grassroots activism and better satisfaction of youth demands” at the Twentieth Party Congress, called for local Komsomol cells to establish innovative cultural recreation institutions, which led to the widespread popularization of youth initiative clubs and other types of youth clubs.<sup>72</sup>

One source of inspiration for the Komsomol officials who promoted the creation of youth initiative clubs might well have been Komsomol-managed clubs of the 1920s, making the youth initiative club movement part of a broader Thaw-era search for a path to communism in Leninist principles and NEP-era ideas untainted by Stalin’s “cult of personality.”<sup>73</sup> Intriguingly, another contribution to the creation of these institutions came from examples abroad. In a trip to Norway in 1955—a result of de-Stalinization—L. K. Baliaskaia, a former Komsomol TsK secretary and at that time a high Komsomol official in Ukraine, recalls being impressed with what she described as a club managed by college students themselves. She promoted the establishment of similar institutions once she returned to Ukraine.<sup>74</sup> Similar clubs in other Soviet bloc countries, and even Yugoslavia, may have served as another source of inspiration.<sup>75</sup> The youth initiative clubs thus represent the kind of conjugation of native and global that Yves Cohen and Stephen Lee call attention to in their investigation of circulation, meaning how external patterns are combined with, and adapted to, local needs, creating innovative hybrid forms.<sup>76</sup>

Regional Komsomol committees quickly responded to these signals. Iasnev from the Moscow Dzerzhinskii district asked for the establishment of a Komsomol-managed club at the 1956 city Komsomol conference.<sup>77</sup> Lower-level Komsomol conferences similarly witnessed voices raised for providing youth with more autonomous leisure institutions. At the 1957 Saratov State University (Saratovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, hereafter SGU) Komsomol conference, the main speaker, A. I. Avrus, articulated the need for innovative, state-sponsored, popular culture organizations, commenting that they already appeared at other universities.<sup>78</sup> Iu. V. Gaponov spoke at the

1956 Moscow State University (Moskovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, hereafter MGU) Komsomol conference in favor of transferring a poorly managed university-owned club to students as a way of both improving its work and escalating youth initiative.<sup>79</sup> Soviet youth newspapers also propagated the youth initiative club movement, publishing articles praising their establishment and providing instructions on how to create one.<sup>80</sup>

The enthusiastic responses at Komsomol conferences translated into grassroots activism. A story in *Komsomol'skaia pravda* opens a window into one in Leningrad, Petrogradskaia Storona. Before its founding, youth came to organized leisure events “with obvious reluctance.” Eventually, Komsomol activists realized that youth “felt themselves to be not owners, but guests,” and decided to take a different approach. They established a youth initiative club, in cooperation with a House of Culture, where “the tone is set by the creative energy and imagination of the youth,” who themselves organized evenings, balls, lectures, debates, and exhibitions.<sup>81</sup> A Moscow club in the Kuibyshev district, Torch, with 200 members in 1957, was described by Komsomol agitprop department officials as a “friendly collective that came together during youth evenings, meetings, debates, tourist trips.”<sup>82</sup> Iurii, who grew up in the city of Kaluga in the 1950s, recalled a Kaluga club, also named Torch, as being a “child of the Thaw”; in contrast to previous practices where “everything originated from above,” this club had “sprung from below, because of the Thaw.” He described how a group of youth interested in creating such a club came together and the Kaluga city Komsomol organization, especially the Kaluga Komsomol newspaper *Molodoi leninets*, took up sponsorship of the club.<sup>83</sup> As a letter by the *Molodoi leninets* editors to the Communist Party Central Committee (PCC) put it, the club drew its inspiration and many organizational details, such as its by-laws, from the Moscow Torch. The Kaluga city Komsomol committee called its creation “a useful, healthy, and very important activity.” It had 172 members by November 1957, 112 of them workers, thus representing a working-class club.<sup>84</sup>

A typical club structure comes from the example of Aktivist, a club for construction workers in the Moscow Krasnopresnenskii district. It had a leadership committee of fifteen members, with work divided into sectors,

each led by an activist interested in that particular aspect of leisure work.<sup>85</sup> Baliasnaia succeeded in getting the first student club established in Dnepropetrovsk, followed by many others. This club had groups of students from several major Dnepropetrovsk colleges in the leadership committee, with the individuals from a particular institute responsible for a day's planned events, leading to "each trying to outdo the last."<sup>86</sup>

The Komsomol TsK took a series of practical measures that helped enable and develop the work of these clubs. It recognized the tensions between the use of trade-union clubs for financially profitable movies, as opposed to youth cultural recreation, and asked the party TsK to transfer one trade-union club in major urban areas to the control of the city Komsomol, and also for district Houses of Culture to be available to youth at least four times a month. Noting that "the Komsomol budget absolutely lacks money" devoted to state-sponsored popular culture, the Komsomol TsK asked the party TsK to allow the Komsomol to use some of its finances, 647,800,000 rubles per year, for such needs. It also acquired the right to raise money for youth cultural recreation from volunteer, Komsomol-organized events such as youth amateur concerts with a paying audience, or collective gathering of metal and paper, with the financial organs not taxing such activities.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, youth initiative clubs received assistance from various institutions within their towns, ranging from trade enterprises to artistic and hobby associations and educational establishments, which defrayed many or all expenses.<sup>88</sup> Consequently, the creation, structure, and financing of youth initiative clubs, and therefore their effective functioning, depended heavily on an intertwining of the encouragement and support of the Komsomol TsK, the organizational impetus of activist local Komsomol committees and youth newspaper editorships, the support of local enterprises, and especially the enthusiasm of Komsomol members themselves.

The youth initiative club campaign took off quickly, and by 1957 acquired a high enough priority among Komsomol activities that the Komsomol propaganda department prepared a summary report entitled "On the Work of Youth Initiative Clubs." Noting that over twenty existed in Odessa alone—a sizable number given that Shelepin called for these clubs only in the previous year—the report stated that they "have to be created in

every town and village cultural establishment.” According to the document, they allow youth to do everything by themselves, giving freedom to initiative and grassroots activism and creating a strong group of activists around Komsomol committees. The report claims that participating in such clubs helped develop collectivism in youth and confidence in their own power and capacity; encouraged unity and friendship among different groups of youth, such as urban and rural, as well as between the mass of youth, Komsomol committees, and youth newspapers; and they “got youth used to rational leisure.”<sup>89</sup>

The Komsomol propaganda department’s presentation of such initiative-oriented youth popular culture activities as instilling normative values and producing of model communists is further evidence of a shift from the discipline-focused, postwar Stalinist model of young New Soviet People to one characterized by enthusiasm and grassroots activism. Together with the other evidence cited above on the nature and structure of youth initiative clubs, it helps demonstrate that this transformation did not occur in official rhetoric only, that it was not simply a Socialist Realist vision of an idealized future that did not mirror actual ground-level practices.<sup>90</sup> Instead, the establishment of youth initiative clubs in the Soviet Union illustrates how the transformations in discourse found tangible expression in the everyday life experiences of their members, whose not only voluntary but eager participation was obligatory for their success.

The content of the events presented by the collectives also supports the claim that they reflected—and inspired—grassroots activism, initiative, and enthusiasm. They responded to the desire of young people for entertainment to a much greater degree than in the postwar Stalinist period. One of the greatest changes occurred in the formal part of youth evening events, previously devoted to a lecture or speech some political-ideology theme. For example, the Leningrad city Komsomol committee indicated in November 1950 that the “main themes of youth evenings” spanned “the struggle of youth for peace and democracy, the great communist construction projects, the image of Lenin and Stalin in literature and the arts.”<sup>91</sup> *Moskovskii komsomolets* published a front-page article in February 1953 about an evening event devoted to the theme of friendship between Moscow college

students and a student delegation from the Kiev State University. After a short speech by a delegation representative, praising the “indivisible friendship” of the brotherly Ukrainian and Russian peoples, as well as the “great teacher and leader” Comrade Stalin, an a capella group gave “an inspired performance of a song about Stalin.”<sup>92</sup> The Gor’kii House of Culture listed fifteen evenings in its annual report for 1949, with 14,200 people attending. As a typical example, it cited the May Day celebration, which began with a formal speech, followed by an amateur concert.<sup>93</sup> In 1950, this club held thirty evenings, with 19,670 visitors, including a series of evenings for election voters, which accounted for 9,915 of the visitors. One evening targeted at young voters, held on November 25, 1950, started with a lecture entitled “The Stalin Constitution and Soviet Youth” by a speaker from the All-Union Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge. After that, the young voters saw a play based on a novel by E. Kazakevich, a Stalin Prize laureate. The evening, as the club reports, “went very well.” Another youth evening at this club, entitled “Peace Will Defeat War,” featured a lecture by two *Komsomol'skaia pravda* journalists on international socialist youth festivals, with a subsequent reading by the poet M. Matusovskii, and had 180 attendees.<sup>94</sup> A 1952 booklet on managing state-sponsored youth popular culture, based on the work of a trade-union club in a Minsk factory, describes youth evenings as “always tied with the production goals of the factory” and “serving to bring up young factory workers in the spirit of Soviet patriotism.”<sup>95</sup>

The format of these pre-1956 youth evenings—political ideology fires, entertainment second—was unlikely to appeal to young people who had just come from a long day of work or study; they wanted to relax and enjoy themselves. Indeed, some evidence indicates that officials had a thorough awareness of this problem already in the postwar Stalin years.<sup>96</sup> The most revealing data comes from a keynote speech at a conference of the Krasnopresnenskii district Komsomol officials, a less open forum than a regular district Komsomol conference, since no ordinary Komsomol members attended. The speaker disparaged the club of the silicate factory for holding too few lectures on youth themes and specifically censured the secretary of the factory Komsomol cell, Comrade Olenin, for not doing anything about

this as, in his words, “youth will not go to them anyway.” Additionally, the club of MGU “has still not become a true center of mass-political work among students,” since lectures held in the club have poor attendance. Specifically, the speaker cited the club of the Stromynka dormitory, where Professor Baskin’s lecture “On Communist Morals” attracted 200 people; a meeting with the writers Merynskii and Iashynym had 130; and a literary evening only 50, despite the hall having capacity for 400. The speaker ended his criticism of the club by claiming that its plan “fails to respond to the various demands of the students,” specifically critiquing “the rare reading of lectures that bring up students in the spirit of Soviet patriotism and loyalty to their Motherland.”<sup>97</sup> This statement hardly reflected the actual demands of students, most of whom were likely grateful that this club only rarely featured lectures on Soviet patriotism.

In contrast, the theme and structure of the formal part of evening events at youth initiative clubs invariably aimed to engage youth, appealing to their interests and desires, while also containing a degree of ideological content. For example, one event at the Odessa Club of Interesting Meetings, billed as an evening for newlyweds, invited young people to discuss love, friendship, loyalty, and jealousy. Placards, drawings, and signs with folk sayings purportedly helped create a warm, informal atmosphere. Beforehand, the organizers collected questions from young people. Among the more revealing were: “How can one learn how to love for real?” “Can one love a second and third time?” “Is it good to be jealous?” A young philosophy teacher addressed these questions and answered inquiries from the audience. Youth could also pose questions for the experienced members of the older generation.<sup>98</sup> The club also held a competition for the best-dressed couple and provided flowers, a beauty salon, and fashion consultation.<sup>99</sup> Another youth evening entitled “Girls! Let’s talk about taste” focused on proper haircuts, clothing, hats, and shoes.<sup>100</sup> According to a radio program, success in organizing these events lay in “constantly trying to find the romantic, not in something unusual, mysterious, but in life itself, with its struggle, victories, and untiring creative work.”<sup>101</sup> Organizers, like those at Club of Interesting Meetings, paid especially careful attention to filling their events with “sharp, interesting content and original forms” of cultural activities, all of which “helps express

the main theme.”<sup>102</sup> The evenings aimed to engage issues that mattered to young people and in the process intensify youth initiative and activism, while ensuring “rational” youth leisure in the context of an official collective.

While lectures, the overwhelming means of political information in the late Stalin years, represented a closed, stultified form of conveying official messages, the post-Stalin era witnessed an explosion in a comparatively open, dynamic mode of ideologically oriented events: youth debates.<sup>103</sup> Notably, the Komsomol TsK’s 1956 internal report to the PCC stated that “we need to use discussions and disputes more widely. Youth like to argue and discuss issues of deep concern to them.” The topics should include those “on the most important questions of modernity, on moral themes, books, movies, plays, friendship, love, comradeship.”<sup>104</sup> According to the report from the Komsomol propaganda department, “it is necessary that fiery debates break out in youth initiative clubs, that youth find here the answers to all the questions that concern them.”<sup>105</sup> The activists of the Leningrad club Petrogradskaia Storona believed that “the rules and norms of communist morals can become convincing only when you defend them successfully in passionate debate, when you are yourself completely convinced of their correctness.” These debates strove to engage young people in discussing issues of fundamental relevance to their lives: “Is a petty bourgeois [*meschanin*] an enemy of society or not?” “About love and loyalty.” “The question of happiness is on the agenda.” An especially serious topic was “What does it mean to live a communist life?” The debates apparently drew a large audience, with the hall not big enough for all those who wished to listen.<sup>106</sup>

The Komsomol TsK promoted the debates as an excellent instrument for instilling communist values and even sent an instructional letter to local Komsomol cells on conducting them. According to this letter, the debates not only have broad popularity, but also an “upbringing purpose” in helping expunge negative phenomena from youth collectives, confirm the best and newest in the lives of young people, and help them clearly express and defend their views. The topic of debate, the letter stated, had to interest youth, with a topic such as “What should a real friend and comrade be like?” Reportedly, the organizers publicized the debate widely and prepared the ground by

issuing satirical newspapers making fun of “improper” views on friendship and love, which inspired heated discussion among youth even before the event itself. The lecturer familiarized himself with local events and used these to answer general questions, such as: “What is the essence of principled behavior among friends?” “Does love presume friendship?” “What is friendship, and what are corrupt relations [*krugovaia poruka*]?” The letter stressed that the lecturer strove to not impose his own opinion, but to inspire debate on each of these questions, and many of those present took part in the dispute and expressed their opinions.<sup>107</sup>

Such events, reflecting the focus on youth enthusiasm and initiative, deliberately encouraged youth to interrogate the tenets of official ideology, morals, and ethics within the context of Komsomol-managed events, with the intention of shaping the outcomes of debates and strengthening their faith. Internal Komsomol TsK communications reveal a further purpose, noting that “currently, debates among youth, as a rule, take place beyond the boundaries of Komsomol organizations.”<sup>108</sup> Plenty of unofficial youth groups devoted to debating issues of concern to youth sprang up in the postwar Stalin years, and the Komsomol wanted to bring these conversations back into spaces with official oversight.<sup>109</sup> Nonetheless, the extended room for discussion and argument caused the Komsomol leadership certain moments of discomfort. At a 1957 meeting of the Moscow city Komsomol committee devoted to explaining the Seventh Komsomol TsK Plenum, Shelepin spoke of those who, instead of true Marxist criticism, had engaged in “demagoguery, lies about the party” and should “be fought decisively.”<sup>110</sup> Another example, described at the MGU Komsomol conference of 1963, came in a debate over abstract art, resulting in accusations that certain students were “showing political immaturity, failing to understand the Party's positions on art.”<sup>111</sup> Thus there were limits to the top-level promotion of youth grassroots initiative: the Khrushchev leadership reined in youth autonomy when it threatened to go beyond the boundaries of the allowable. The dates cited have particular resonance, as both 1957–58 and 1962–63 represented periods when those at the top of the party hierarchy briefly swung away from pursuing a more pluralistic, tolerant policy course, due to both international and



domestic developments. Not surprisingly, officials censured what they labeled “excessive” youth initiative and autonomy.

Youth initiative clubs organized other events besides youth evenings. The Kaluga Torch sponsored a range of free-time activities,<sup>112</sup> such as a skiing trip to Sergiev Skit, which the *Molodoi leninets* editors cited as illustrating the didactic function of the club. They spotlighted Valentin Kriukhin, a youth who “radically changed” his behavior during the trip. At first, he apparently tried “to set himself off from others, as always,” but when he met with difficulties, “everyone helped him, and soon his arrogance was gone. The guy felt the strength of the collective.”<sup>113</sup> This case demonstrates how the clubs simultaneously promoted the official Soviet value of collectivism, in contrast to “arrogant” individualism, and imposed the social control of the collective—its “strength”—on individuals whose behavior deviated from accepted norms. Undoubtedly, similar reprimands of misbehaving club members took place at youth evenings and other events.

While the authorities intended all youth initiative clubs to serve to some degree as institutions of social control, this function comes into full light in cases where the Komsomol interacted with youth *kompanii* (cliques) of marginal, semidissident poets and musicians.<sup>114</sup> Perhaps the most evocative example comes from the attempt to create a club for the unofficial poets of Moscow's Maiakovskii Square. Referred to as a Soviet “Speaker's Corner,” Maiakovskii Square became from 1958 a gathering place of young poets who read their poetry aloud, drawing huge crowds and establishing an informal public poetry scene. While at first the poetry tended to stay within the limits of tolerance, by 1960 its tone had changed to an increasingly harsh critique of the Soviet government. The authorities, hard-pressed to deal with mounting criticism in a public context, began to harass these poets via police and Komsomol patrols. At one point, however, a group composed of lower-level Komsomol officials and activists, with some poets and enthusiasts from Maiakovskii Square, decided to bring about a different solution and attempted to organize a club for the poets to read their poetry. The reform-minded lower-level officials managed to convince mid-level officials in the district Komsomol committee and the manager of a club building to provide space for an autonomous poetry club.<sup>115</sup> For the authorities, this would solve the

immediate problem of curtailing public criticism and redirecting it into a nonpublic context—thus reestablishing social control over the public space of Maiakovskii Square. In the long term, a likely goal involved the gradual imposition of social controls over the poetry itself in the confines of this officially controlled institution. Thus, *kompanii* not only strove to privatize public spaces, as Fürst insightfully pointed out, but in some cases the authorities actively assisted this process.<sup>116</sup>

Shelepin's 1956 speech laid the groundwork for the appearance of other novel initiative-based institutions. A particularly fascinating case study comes from MGU's *Arkhimed* studio, which combined elements of a youth initiative club and an amateur art collective.<sup>117</sup> This group formed around the staging of *Arkhimed*, an opera that originated from a resolution of the October 1959 annual conference of the Komsomol cell of the MGU physics department calling for a springtime celebration. During the next few months, a select group of Komsomol cultural recreation officials and Komsomol activists among the MGU physics students invested a great deal of energy into writing and staging *Arkhimed*. The plot of this opera juxtaposed the heroic Archimedes, a university dean at Syracuse University, fighting for the future of physics against the might of the Greek gods, who are wary of being left behind by the progress of science (fig. 1).

They retaliate by encouraging corruption among university staff and enticing students to drink and dance the Twist: one of the key moments comes when, according to the opera's libretto, “the students, tempted by the gods, for a minute lose their humanity. A general Twist-dancing [*tvistopliaska*] begins.” Its first performance, in the overcrowded hall of the MGU-owned club in 1960, “had unimaginable success” (fig. 2).<sup>118</sup>

At the 1963 MGU Komsomol committee conference, the secretary called *Arkhimed* “a shining phenomenon in the life of the physics department, and even the whole university.”<sup>119</sup>

The play combined three basic tropes that came to the fore in Thaw-era official discourse and policy: propagation of science and technology, criticism of bureaucratism, and disparagement of “negative” student behavior such as *stiliagi*-style dancing.<sup>120</sup> Such censure of “deviance” occurred elsewhere as well, as in an exhibition at an evening in the club Petrogradskaia

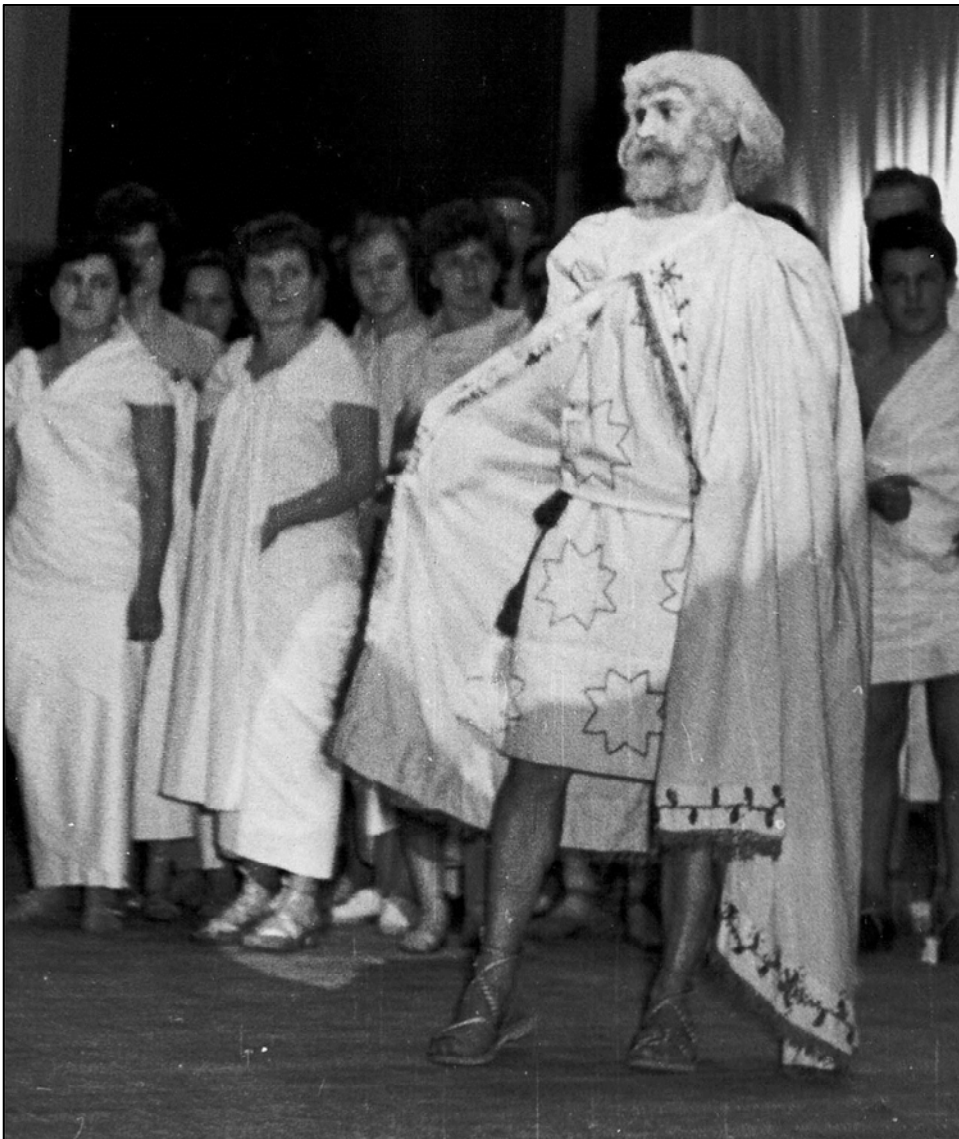


Figure 1. Archimedes challenges the Greek gods. (Photo courtesy of the private archive of Marina A.)

Storona, called an electric patrol. It featured dolls dancing and “suddenly—a wailing siren. The lights of two projectors pick out a dancing pair that performs an ugly [referring to American-style] dance move, twisting the dance.”<sup>121</sup> Even the day of the club’s opening witnessed several short skits making fun of “bureaucracy, boredom, drunkenness, and ‘style’ [referring to *stiliagi*].”<sup>122</sup> The targeting of *stiliagi* in particular illuminates the at least outward concordances between youth initiative in state-sponsored popular culture and the broader Thaw-era campaign against youth “deviance.”<sup>123</sup>



Figure 2. The audience of Arkhimed: note that many had to stand in order to fit into the overcrowded hall during the performance, and some sat on the banisters. (Courtesy of the private archive of Marina A.)

*Arkhimed* participants recall enthusiastically engaging in organized, initiative-based leisure. Interviews with members of the collective resound with ebullience: Tat'iana enjoyed an “enormous emotional lift” from her performances in the opera; for Dmitrii, it “was just fun.” In addition to the performance itself, the opera experience involved the customary banquet for its members afterward, remembered with pleasure by Sergei (fig. 3).<sup>124</sup>

The group memoir exhibits the same messages throughout its pages, with its contributors recalling the extracurricular life of the department, such as “*Arkhimed*,” having had, in the words of the poet-bard S. A. Krylov, “an extremely significant role in the lives of students” and constituting “a bright memory of wonderful times.”<sup>125</sup>

The *Arkhimed* collective played a deep social role as well. According to Ol'ga, the chorus master, it represented “true life” for its members, the center of their social world; Svetlana confirms that they formed relationships that for many participants have lasted to this day: they are “friends, with whom we are close and we hang out together [*obshchaemsia*] with pleasure.”<sup>126</sup> For the opera's director, Gaponov, “creating a collective” from among the group's participants, “tying them all together,” constituted the key goal of the project, both in preparing for artistic performances and at private, intragroup events, so that such interaction became “a norm of life” for the people involved.<sup>127</sup> Svetlana Kovaleva similarly stresses the importance of “our friendship group, which lasted until even the present,” and says that the opera gave a “sportive, combative spark [*strunku*] for the rest of one's life,” inspiring her to consider that “whatever we want—we will achieve it, we will do it.”<sup>128</sup> Similarly, the coauthor of the opera, V. A. Miliaev, stresses its crucial role in personal growth, because having to work with so many people developed his social skills; for Sergei, gaining public presentation abilities had important consequences for his professional life. Both also stressed the crucial role of friends made through *Arkhimed*.<sup>129</sup>

For these young people the government's promotion of initiative-based youth leisure resulted in a far-ranging impact on their lives. Attracted by the “emotional lift” and “fun” of performing in the opera, they gained valuable skills and knowledge. What shines out most, though, is the close friendship network that played a crucial role both when the participants attended



Figure 3. A postperformance banquet. (Photo courtesy of the private archive of Marina A.)

university, and in their subsequent adult lives. In effect, the authorities succeeded in ensuring that their socialization into the adult world occurred in the context of an officially approved and monitored collective. By promoting and supporting youth initiative in organized leisure, the Komsomol hierarchy inculcated, to a degree, the values of collectivism and active social work and promoted Thaw-era discursive tropes such as promotion of science and censure of *stiliagi*.

Evidence indicates that other youth initiative-based institutions also powerfully impacted youth, perhaps in some cases too much so, as revealed by an alarming letter from the leadership council of the Kuibyshev City Youth Club in Novosibirsk region to the first secretary of the Komsomol, Pavlov, in January 1964. It describes the founding of the club in 1962 and its rapid rise in popularity. However, this club, with four hundred “fanatics-enthusiasts” who “devote all [their] free time after work to the club,” and with events attracting thirty-five thousand people in 1963, lacked a space of its

own, despite promises from the regional Komsomol and Party organizations. This, the authors said, posed the danger of the club collapsing and youth who actively participated “walking away embittered” if Pavlov did not intervene. The letter was accompanied by a separate note from the president of the club, who held the rank of an unpaid city Komsomol committee secretary, explicitly stating that “if the club fails, the Komsomol members and youth of the city will lose faith in the Komsomol organization of the region and in all guarantees and promises of party organs.”<sup>130</sup> Confirming the genuine importance to young people of the new clubs, the missive hints that in some cases, these institutions acquired a bigger meaning in the lives of young people than the Komsomol itself. It also points to the potential problem of grassroots disillusionment when initiative from below does not receive support from above.

Overall, participation in youth initiative clubs achieved some of the goals of the post-Stalin Soviet leadership. It resulted in youth behavior that fit the Thaw-era Kremlin’s image of the young New Soviet Person as an initiative-oriented enthusiast, as opposed to the postwar Stalin model of disciplined, obedient youth. Simultaneously, spending one’s free time in government-monitored state-sponsored cultural activities meant more extensive social controls, both via the corrective force of the collective and the delimiting of possible opportunities for behavior that the Communist Party considered “deviant.” Furthermore, the clubs had an outsize impact because they drew the more energetic, innovative, initiative-taking youth, who had the social resources to create unofficial cliques and networks outside the Party-state system into official collectives. Yet in contrast to Kharkhordin’s evaluation of official collectives, this essay postulates that the clubs did not result in more oppression for their members and did not have cynical strife characterizing their internal life. Instead, though enabled and encouraged by the Soviet leadership, the essence of these official collectives lay in creativity and initiative from below, which flowered due to enthusiastic, volunteer work by young people. Youth initiative club members helped establish, and participated in, these institutions, spending a great deal of time and energy in doing so, because these clubs reflected their own desires and interests. Like the members of *Arkhimed*, the Kuibyshev City Youth Club, and other youth

initiative institutions, young people found meaning, emotional support, self-definition, and lifelong friendships within these official collectives. Moreover, by actively engaging in youth initiative clubs and having fun doing so, young people opened up increasing space for their own agency. In effect, they came together in a self-willed fashion to pursue activities reflecting their desires, changing the institutions of state-sponsored popular culture in minute ways in the process. In other words, official collectives and friendship groups did not necessarily constitute separate spaces, the former surveilling and repressive and the latter supportive and meaningful, at least in some cases.

Evidence shows that this finding applies to other institutions as well, since youth initiative clubs were not the only sectors of Komsomol activity where the Komsomol TsK encouraged autonomous youth grassroots activism. The Komsomol urged its members to show initiative in organizing the novel phenomenon of local youth festivals in the Thaw, especially the 1957 Moscow International Youth Festival.<sup>131</sup> As part of its struggle against “deviance,” the Komsomol TsK called for youth to take initiative in community-based policing by creating patrols of Komsomol members.<sup>132</sup> Another interesting case of autonomous youth activism comes from the Komsomol construction brigades that originated in Moscow universities in the later 1950s and traveled to the Virgin Lands and other “heroic” sites.<sup>133</sup> These and other examples demonstrate that youth initiative clubs, far from being *sui generis*, are at the center of the Soviet leadership’s youth policy in the Thaw. Of course, not all youth wanted to belong to Party-state official collectives, and young, marginal artistic intellectuals formed unofficial *kompanii* as one means of escaping collectives.<sup>134</sup>

## Conflicts over Initiative

Nonetheless, discontinuities and tensions existed between the vision of “appropriate” popular culture activities held by many youth initiative club members and some figures of authority. The first speaker in a Komsomol TsK-sponsored conference devoted to youth initiative clubs in May 1962 stated that many of the conference participants likely recalled meetings with officials at the dawn of the youth initiative club movement where “many



expressed mistrust, lack of faith” in the clubs.<sup>135</sup> In a prominent example, the Moscow Kuibyshev district club, Torch, which served as a model for many others, at one point almost failed. According to the 1957 report from the Komsomol propaganda department, club activists proved unable to overcome the “conservatism and mistrust” toward the club from the local House of Culture, which denied them space for events. The report harshly censured the Kuibyshev district Komsomol committee, which “did not exhibit principled behavior” with this problem, and the Moscow city Komsomol committee received a similar reprimand for its “skepticism toward youth initiative.”<sup>136</sup> This incident offers a glimpse of the tensions between younger, lower-level Komsomol officials and activists, enthusiastic about the new, initiative-based organizations, and older, more conservative, mid-level Komsomol officials and club managers reluctant to permit innovations, preferring the postwar Stalinist model of militant discipline.

In another case, the conflict occurred between lower and mid-level Komsomol workers and mid-level party bureaucrats. The editors of the Kaluga *Molodoi leninets* complained to the party TsK about the city party committee's actions Torch: “The spirit of the cult of personality has become so rooted in the consciousness of certain party cadres that they are ready to limit and regulate everything, including the life-filled creativity of the masses, which even makes them afraid.” On November 20, 1956, the committee called in the club's activists and “voiced baseless, irrational charges,” condemning the “intolerable autonomy” in the establishment of Torch, and labeling those in charge of the club “apolitical.” Furthermore, the party officials accused the club members of providing “a wide breach for the enemy,” implying that the club served the interests of Western Europe and the United States. As a result, the committee members decreed the closing of the club and imposed punishments for the Torch activists: the editors of *Molodoi leninets* and the second secretary of the city Komsomol committee. The denunciation letter commented that such misguided “vigilance” can come only from “people poisoned by bureaucracy, who are thus capable of destroying initiative.”<sup>137</sup> Torch supporters appealed to a series of organs at the center and quickly received a response. By December 9, *Komsomol'skaia pravda* published a story condemning the situation. Iurii still remembers this

article, indicating the significance of the club in the lives of at least some Kaluga youth.<sup>138</sup> A subsequent investigation by the party TsK propaganda department confirmed all the facts in the original complaint. It ensured the continued existence of the club as well as the revocation of party reprimands on the club activists.<sup>139</sup> Such major actions by the Khrushchev leadership, which undermined the authority of regional party leaders and expressed strong support for youth grassroots enthusiasm and initiative, made clear the seriousness of, and dedication to, the new course in the party TsK. They likewise served as guidelines for all party officials elsewhere who were reluctant to embrace youth initiative clubs. This example draws an especially stark divide between those who supported Thaw-era reforms in regard to youth initiative in state-sponsored popular culture, and those older and in positions of power who expressed a conservative desire to maintain militant Stalin-era methods and approaches.

The promotion of the youth initiative clubs also caused some tensions with well-established cultural recreation institutions. A case in point comes from a December 14, 1956, note sent by a high official in the Ministry of Culture to the minister, who then forwarded it to the Komsomol TsK. The note suggests that as a consequence of youth initiative clubs, the best organizers and amateur artists may leave trade-union clubs and “form some sort of elite caste of chosen youth.” Problematically, the new institutions “focus on the newness, unusual nature, originality of this enterprise, and not its practical purpose and necessity.” He implies that in some cases, the youth initiative clubs are becoming too autonomous, creating a “special organization of youth,” a “Komsomol within the Komsomol,” with its own program. He cites the Kaluga Torch as illustrating such problems and censures *Komsomol'skaia pravda* for defending it. Concluding that organizing youth initiative clubs “is a mistake,” he proposes instead that the Komsomol form commissions to participate in the work of trade-union clubs.<sup>140</sup> Examining the motivations behind this note, we find the same sort of conflict as in the Torch case: the official expresses wariness of the autonomy and initiative found within youth initiative clubs and implicitly advocates a militant vision of the path to communism, guided from above. The note also expresses the bureaucrat’s concern to protect his turf—the ministry’s

oversight of the cultural recreation network—against an unwelcome incursion. The references to the Kaluga club hints at this local conflict achieving the status of a broader internal struggle over the course of state-sponsored youth popular culture policy and gives more weight to the party TsK propaganda department's condemnation of the Kaluga regional party committee.

These instances exemplify the many early attempts of officials to hamper the development of youth initiative clubs. Still, the support by top-level officials in the party and Komsomol, and their popularity among youth at the grassroots, ensured continual expansion. Indeed, the party TsK and the Komsomol leadership continued to promote youth initiative clubs during the brief swing away from more pluralistic, tolerant policies from late 1956 to early 1958, as clearly demonstrated by the cases of the Torch clubs in both Moscow and Kaluga.<sup>141</sup> By 1959, the Ministry of Culture seems to have accepted their existence, publishing a textbook for club managers and employees that mentions youth initiative clubs as a new form of club work.<sup>142</sup> In 1962, the clubs reportedly acquired “a mass character,” and their main concerns shifted from questions of existence to a search for space and financial support.<sup>143</sup> The 1962 Fourteenth Komsomol Congress mentioned that 214 varied youth initiative-based collectives existed in Moscow alone.<sup>144</sup> Due to their escalating integration into the state-sponsored popular culture system, by the late 1950s and early 1960s these organizations proved increasingly capable of defending their interests against local officials who disliked youth initiative and preferred disciplined behavior.

*Arkhimed* serves as a good example. From the first performance in 1960, its organizers had to deal with a multitude of obstacles from the physics department administration which, according to Kovaleva, “tried to use various means to delimit youth activism.” The party committee and department administration demanded to see a rehearsal of the opera, after which “passionate debate” broke out, with parts of *Arkhimed* censored.<sup>145</sup> Still, many sections remained that inspired official disapproval, such as hints of official corruption, implicit mockery of university administrators, daring costumes, and the implication that Twist-dancing and intoxication were widespread among physics students.<sup>146</sup> In 1961, the second year of the

collective, the department Party committee “was aiming to shut down the holiday” until the activists, led by Gaponov, the director of the opera and the new physics department Komsomol secretary, and with the assistance of the famous physicist L. D. Landau, managed to invite the visiting Niels Bohr to the performance (fig. 4).

While *Arkhimed* remained strong for the next few years, in 1965 the physics department administration intensified its pressure on the collective.<sup>147</sup> By 1969, as part of a broader tamping down on the more autonomous and controversial forms of amateur artists at MGU and elsewhere following the suppression of the Prague Spring, the physics department party committee forbade the staging of the opera. In 1970, the administration labeled the opera “apolitical” and refused to allow rehearsal space, effectively forcing the collective out of MGU altogether.<sup>148</sup>



Figure 4. Niels Bohr giving a speech after the *Arkhimed* performance. Landau is to his right. On the left is an amateur actor from *Arkhimed*. Courtesy of the private archive of Svetlana S.

The *Arkhimed* timeline roughly corresponds to the fate of the youth initiative club movement, whose popularity exploded in the late 1950s due to increasing grassroots support and the sometimes grudging acceptance by local officials. The neat fit of youth initiative clubs with the party TsK's call for escalating societal self-management at the Twenty-Second Party Congress in 1961 proved especially important to their growth.<sup>149</sup> These youth initiative clubs helped inspire other novel institutions in the early 1960s, such as jazz clubs and youth cafes.<sup>150</sup> Some Soviet television programs, such as *KVN* and *Blue Flame*, drew on youth initiative club precedents, adapting them for broadcasting and garnering widespread popularity in the Soviet Union.<sup>151</sup>

By 1967, some twelve thousand youth initiative-based organizations functioned across the Soviet Union.<sup>152</sup> Though a close search of the Komsomol archives did not reveal actual statistics on the number of participants, reports from individual clubs indicate that some had several hundred members, with 172 for the Kaluga *Torch*, 200 for the Moscow *Torch*, and a huge 4000 for the Kuybishev City Youth Club. Likely, then, over a million participated in varied youth clubs in 1967. The Komsomol propaganda department even devoted separate archival folders in 1966 and 1967 to documents relating to such institutions.<sup>153</sup>

Nonetheless, the situation started to change in the mid-1960s. If Khrushchev's speech at the 1958 Thirteenth Komsomol Congress spotlighted the goal of developing grassroots initiative as an important priority, Brezhnev's speech at the Fifteenth Komsomol Congress in 1966 spoke of youth activism only in the context of labor and economic development.<sup>154</sup> Pavlov's speech at the congress did not list strengthening of youth initiative as one of the Komsomol's main goals. Instead, he underscored discipline: "The most important goal in the current conditions is the further strengthening of the Komsomol and its discipline, the unity of its ranks, the increase of demands on each Komsomol member."<sup>155</sup> The separate folders devoted to initiative-oriented youth institutions disappeared by 1968. The definitive clampdown came with the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the forces of the Soviet Union and other Soviet bloc states to put an end to the effort of constructing "communism with a human face."<sup>156</sup> All this resulted in ideological pressure against the more autonomous and daring forms of youth

leisure organization. In 1968, the Novosibirsk authorities closed down the youth club-cafe Under the Integral for its controversial program, with the performance of the semidissident bard A. A. Galich serving as the catalytic event.<sup>157</sup> In 1969, MGU canceled *Arkhimed* and expelled the youth theater Our Home.<sup>158</sup> The keynote speech at the 1970 Sixteenth Komsomol Congress failed to mention youth clubs and deemphasized rhetoric on youth initiative, instead underlining the need for more discipline.<sup>159</sup>

While remaining an important component of youth leisure organization, youth clubs increasingly lost their independence and reliance on grassroots initiative, and thus their attraction for a major subset of young people, especially older youth. Concomitantly, the Komsomol authorities promoted the establishment of clubs aimed at adolescents (*podrostki*), as opposed to the more autonomous older youth.<sup>160</sup> However, Komsomol activists in the 1970s drew on the earlier youth initiative clubs to create disco clubs and, in the early 1980s, rock ‘n’ roll clubs.<sup>161</sup> In the mid-1980s, youth clubs provided spaces for the development of civil society in the context of M. S. Gorbachev’s reforms.<sup>162</sup>

An investigation of youth initiative clubs suggests a different timeline for the turn toward a more militant, discipline-oriented policy by the Party-state than the one proposed in Vladislav Zubok’s work on Thaw-era intelligentsia.<sup>163</sup> While he argues that 1962 marked the beginning of a clampdown on autonomy in Soviet culture that continued, largely unabated, into the 1960s, this year had little resonance for youth initiative clubs, which expanded and prospered, with little pressure from above. Only in the later 1960s, several years after the coup against Khrushchev, did the more autonomous youth initiative clubs experience significant obstacles to their activities. This hints at significant gaps in Soviet policy relating to elite, intelligentsia culture as opposed to popular culture.

The fact that the trope of discipline constituted a central part of later Stalin-era discourse on young people, and that the post-Stalin leadership decided to shift emphasis to youth initiative, meant that enthusiastic supporters of youth initiative tended to oppose other practices associated with Stalin. They instead approved many of the reforms instituted by the Khrushchev leadership, especially those presented as reviving the drive to

build communism. Participants in *Arkhimed* frequently described themselves as having believed in a vision of communism “with a human face,” romantic and initiative-based, during their youth. In Anatolii's words, when he was young, “it seemed that communist ideology could be cleaned up and made into something decent,” something “romantic, positive.” Tat'iana recalled her faith and that of her friends in constructing communism. Miliaev attributed the popularity of *Arkhimed* to the opera fitting “the liberal spirit of the time, a spirit of freedom of expression.”<sup>164</sup> While undoubtedly reflecting some nostalgia for a lost youth, these statements reveal a broader meaning when considered together with other evidence. The letter about the Kaluga Torch deployed rhetoric unambiguously critical of the Stalinist trope of “vigilance” and praised the post-Stalinist emphasis on “life-filled creativity.” So did the Komsomol propaganda department report when it censured the Moscow city Komsomol committee for its suspicions of youth initiative. The physicist Landau is well known for inviting reforms and opposing more ideologically militant colleagues and university administrators. This essay does not mean to argue that such correlations prove the existence of two camps in Thaw-era Soviet society, one that supported reforms, and the other opposed. Instead, it proposes the need to go beyond this binary and read these conflicts in the context of debates over initiative versus discipline that arose in the early days of Soviet rule.

During the NEP, public struggles with remarkably similar themes occurred in the sphere of state-sponsored youth popular culture. One major contest took place over the future of Komsomol-managed youth clubs, key spaces for youth initiative in the NEP. Those promoting youth autonomy wanted such clubs to remain independent collectives, with local Komsomol cells managing the cultural entertainment of young people. In contrast, those calling for centralized supervision from above by adults wanted clubs owned and managed by trade unions to serve as the central institutions organizing state-sponsored youth popular culture in urban settings. An instruction booklet reporting on the results of an all-union conference in the later 1920s with high officials from the Komsomol, trade unions, and political propaganda organs reveals that the pendulum had swung away from tolerance of greater youth autonomy in a decisive manner. The conference criticized the

institutionalization of autonomous youth clubs and instead cited the need to organize state-sponsored popular culture for youth in special “youth sections” in trade-union clubs, with the Komsomol assisting trade unions instead of managing organized youth recreation independently.<sup>165</sup> As Stalin increasingly took control in the latter half of the 1920s, the authorities disbanded all youth clubs and imposed extensive centralized controls over state-sponsored popular culture, for both young people and adults, throughout the rest of Stalin’s rule.<sup>166</sup> Thus, the Thaw-era swing to supporting youth autonomy in youth initiative clubs should not be equated simply with a reformist victory over Stalinist conservatives. In addition to the problems with this perspective identified by authors such as Dobson and Bittner, it also poorly captures the long-term political and ideological conflicts that shaped the contrasting Stalinist and post-Stalin approaches. While advocacy of youth initiative certainly remained largely submerged during the Stalin years, the officials who enacted the push for youth autonomy in the mid-1950s onward acquired their places within the hierarchy under Stalin and developed their viewpoint on this question during the Stalin era.<sup>167</sup>

Nonetheless, even those who generally advocated for youth initiative during the Thaw disagreed on the appropriate degree of autonomy, and the position of officials on this question evolved over time. The example of youth debates discussed earlier demonstrated that, especially during periods of social and international tensions, the Party-state authorities, including the Khrushchev leadership that tended to support youth initiative, reined in what it perceived as excessive autonomy. Overall, though, the possibilities for youth grassroots activism and agency escalated substantially throughout the Thaw; if in the mid-1950s the default position of officials toward youth initiative and youth initiative clubs was rather hesitant, by the end of the 1950s, only a minority of militant-oriented bureaucrats expressed skepticism.

Yet youth initiative institutions had the potential to push the boundaries of the permissible without crossing them and to deploy Aesopian language to express viewpoints unacceptable in direct speech, going beyond the intentions of the Khrushchev leadership in the process. In the case of the Kuibyshev City Youth Club, this institution seems to have acquired more legitimacy than the local Komsomol among at least certain of its young members—a result



that certainly contradicted the goals of the authorities for the youth initiative club movement. Such subversive potential existed even among the young members of *Arkhimed*. A major point of conflict between the department party committee and the *Arkhimed* student collective unfurled over the Greek god Apollo's backup dancers—who, in a scene designed to seduce the students of Archimedes into following Apollo into music and art instead of physics, performed a cabaret-style dance in daring costumes (fig. 5).

Svetlana, one of the dancers, says that the students made the costumes by shortening their artistic gymnastics outfits; they even wanted to dance the Charleston or use a twirling stick, but decided against it. When university and party officials saw the costumes at the rehearsal, “of course, their jaws dropped [*oni, konechno, akhnuli*].” Many officials found the costumes excessive and frivolous and tried to get the dancers to at least take off the gloves for a more “sporty look.” The students insisted that they sought to depict the spirit of the young Greek women dancing for Apollo and managed to keep their costumes unchanged. Yet another, unvoiced motive for the costumes and the number itself, according to Svetlana, was for the chance to perform a foreign dance, in appropriate garb.<sup>168</sup> Kovaleva recalls that the style of the dance constituted another reason for the indignation of the party committee: that the “dance is not ours, it is 'western.’” Still, they allowed it and—unsurprisingly—the student audience “liked it very much, girls with such figures.”<sup>169</sup>

In addition, the opera depicted dancing the Twist as negative, and many members of the audience may have understood it as such, with the coauthor of *Arkhimed* Valerii specifically commenting that he disliked *stiliagi* and intended no irony in the Twist-dancing scene. Regardless of the author’s intention, Gaponov emphasized that such scenes were deliberately included in not only *Arkhimed* but other performances as a means of exhibiting officially censured dances in official venues. Plenty of students, as Dmitrii recalls, welcomed a chance to see the kinds of dances they engaged in at unofficial student parties performed in shows onstage. Sergei liked that scene most of all, both for its “beautiful young women, dancing well,” as well as its realistic depiction of everyday life in the physicists’ dormitory.<sup>170</sup> While the risqué costumes challenged gender norms in regard to appropriate garb for

official student performances, the cabaret-like dance and especially the Twist subverted the state-prescribed mission to expunge "Western" influence and *stiliagi* behavior. *Arkhimed* enabled students to exhibit officially condemned dances and thus to negotiate and expand the limits of tolerance for non-Soviet styles, both reflecting and advancing youth agency in the process.<sup>171</sup> Interviews with young artists in contexts other than the Soviet capital indicate that parallel processes occurred elsewhere as well. Mikhail R. recalls how in an amateur arts collective at Saratov State University in the later 1950s, the student who portrayed a cheater on an exam danced to foxtrot music.



Figure 5. The cabaret-style dancers in *Arkhimed*. (Photo courtesy of the private archive of Marina A.)

While overtly this put the foxtrot in a negative light—and allowed the collective to pass official censorship without any trouble—in reality the situation was more complex, since the role was given to the most popular, good-looking man in the group, implicitly associating high status and prestige with "western"-style music.<sup>172</sup> Other research demonstrates that even in the Brezhnev years, youth clubs provided cover for various unsanctioned activities.<sup>173</sup>

In rare cases, the subversive aspects of youth initiative club work in the Thaw acquired a distinctly political cast. The club offered by the Komsomol authorities to the Maiakovskii Square poets came with a promise of no censorship and full autonomy for its members. They organized a literature section and also wanted to stage an exhibit of abstract art. However, the director of the establishment that provided the room for the club refused to permit the exhibit, and the Komsomol district and city committees chose to not force the issue. The poets decided to return to the square, and soon afterward the government used force to disperse them.<sup>174</sup> By explicitly going far beyond the boundaries defined for culture, and attempting to stretch the tolerance of the Khrushchev authorities for youth initiative too much, the poets placed themselves in patent opposition to the Party-state, resulting in their repression.<sup>175</sup>

### Conclusion

This essay illuminates the appearance, function, and significance of youth initiative clubs during the Thaw. These establishments represent one example of the institutional grounding of the discursive and policy emphasis of the post-Stalin leadership on youth initiative. The Thaw-era authorities intended these clubs both to appeal to youth desires and to forge young New Soviet People. The latter were characterized by initiative and autonomy to a much greater degree than the previous, postwar Stalin idealized image of disciplined, obedient, and relatively passive youth. The transformation in public rhetoric on youth initiative and the establishment of the youth initiative clubs relate directly to Stalin's death and the ascendancy of a new leadership in the Kremlin. They would not have occurred organically as a result of

postwar reconstruction if Stalin had remained in power, highlighting that state-sponsored popular culture for young people constitutes one area where Stalin's death served as a major watershed. Further research on other areas of Soviet life will help further illuminate the extent of breaks and continuities across 1953.

While youth initiative clubs represented a break with immediate past practices, they also reflected underlying continuities stretching back throughout the history of the party, even to prerevolutionary discussions over spontaneity and consciousness. The continued relevance of these conflicts demonstrate that issues relating to youth autonomy evoke deep tensions lying at the heart of the Soviet project. Indeed, the question of how to build communism—trusting in broad-based, decentralized popular support or relying on a small, centralized, conscious elite—plagued the party from the very beginning. They would continue to inspire strife throughout the later history of the USSR.<sup>176</sup> While those advocating for youth initiative generally supported many other aspects of the post-Stalin reforms, contextualizing the youth initiative clubs in the long-term fractures described above illustrates the need to go beyond the conservative-reformist binary. This binary, as I demonstrated, does not adequately convey the complexities and historical roots of Thaw-era struggles.

The authorities did intend youth initiative clubs to increase social control, and arguably these institutions did so, in the sense that a large number of urban youth spent their time in state-monitored collectives within government-owned establishments, instead of in private settings. This decreased opportunities for open “deviance,” such as *stiliagi*-like behavior or hooliganism. Still, these official collectives did not function to increase oppression and did not force people to turn to unofficial, private friendship networks for support and solace. Instead, young club members, such as the members of *Arkhimed*, the Kaluga Torch, the Moscow Torch, the Kuybishev City Youth Club, and other institutions found friends, emotional support, a source of meaning, and a great deal of fun within these—quite official—collectives. Instead of decreasing the space for individual autonomy, these clubs provided substantially more opportunities for youth agency, enabling youth to organize together in public settings and pursue mutually desirable

goals, mainly the aspiration for fun and entertainment. As such, they both reflected and enabled the increased capacity of young Soviet citizens to shape their environment in minute ways to fit their desires during the Thaw.

Furthermore, the youth initiative clubs did not always function as desired by the post-Stalin party and Komsomol leadership. In some cases, they implicitly subverted the intentions of the official party line, such as the campaign against *stiliagi*. In others, they explicitly crossed the boundaries of the tolerable, as with the poets of the Maiakovskii Square and youth debates that expressed open, systematic criticism of the Party-state. Such occasions of what the authorities labeled “excessive” youth autonomy, especially in the periods of swings toward a militant stance during the Thaw, resulted in censure and even repression for young people. This exposes the limits of the promotion of youth initiative from above.

Concomitantly, these occasions illustrate that the post-Stalin emphasis on official collectives hardly constituted a panacea for what the leadership considered social problems hindering the construction of communism. Indeed, since the youth initiative clubs, in order to succeed in attracting youth, had to provide substantial room for youth autonomy and satisfy actual youth desires, they always posed the threat of subverting the control of the Party-state system. In contrast to the Khrushchev leadership, the Brezhnev regime chose to minimize this risk, turning decisively toward discipline and clamping down on the expression of more daring forms of youth initiative in the clubs, especially after the Prague Spring. This undoubtedly contributed to the turn of young people away from participating in official collectives and the Party-state in general, since the system offered youth fewer ways to satisfy their desires.<sup>177</sup> Thus, the promotion of discipline instead of initiative in youth policy under Brezhnev arguably played a not unimportant role in the eventual destabilization of the Soviet Union as the population increasingly stopped participating in Party-state institutions and strove to satisfy their wants in nonofficial contexts.

## Notes

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I would like to acknowledge the invaluable advice provided by Donald J. Raleigh in helping shape this piece, as well as the broader research project, provisionally entitled “Socialist Fun: Youth, Consumption, and Popular Culture in the Cold War Soviet Union, 1945–1970.” I also thank Emily Baran, Susan Costanzo, Jeffrey Jones, Louise McReynolds, Joan Neuberger, Michael Paulauskas, the audience at a 2009 panel at the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies national convention, and the two anonymous reviewers from *The Carl Beck Papers*, all of whose constructive criticism enabled a substantially stronger final monograph. A Mellon/ACLS dissertation completion fellowship, a Fulbright-Hays research abroad fellowship, and a University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill travel grant supported the necessary primary source research in Russia, where the staff at the Komsomol archive in Moscow, in particular G. M. Tokareva, proved very helpful.

1. The Komsomol, the Soviet mass organization for those fourteen to twenty-eight dedicated to socializing youth, grew rapidly in the 1950s, with half of all those eligible becoming members by 1958; participation was essential for attending college or joining the Communist Party: Allen Kassof, *The Soviet Youth Program: Regimentation and Rebellion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 14–18.
2. *XX s'ezd KPSS: Stenograficheskii otchet*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1956), 603, 606–08.
3. While recognizing the debate over the use of the term “Thaw,” I use it as the best means of conveying the sense of quickening change during the post-Stalin years. See Stephen V. Bittner, *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw: Experience and Memory in Moscow's Arbat* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 1–13, and Nancy Condee, “Uncles, Deviance, and Ritual Combat: The Cultural Codes of Khrushchev's Thaw,” in William Taubman, Sergei Khrushchev, and Abbott Gleason, eds. *Nikita Khrushchev* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 160–76.
4. As expressed by V. I. Lenin: *Uchitsia kommunizmu*, vol. 1, *V. I. Lenin, KPSS: O partiinom rukovodstve komsomola* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1982), 41.
5. About 47 percent of the RSFSR population was under twenty-five in 1959: Tsentral'noe Statisticheskoe Upravlenie, *Itogi vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1959 goda, RSFSR* (Moscow, 1963).

6. I do not use the term subculture due to this concept's indelible association with homogeneous, tightly bounded groups that practice class-based resistance: Andy Bennett and Keith Kahn-Harris, Introduction to *After Subculture: Critical Studies in Contemporary Youth Culture*, ed. Andy Bennett and Keith Kahn-Harris (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 1–18. In turn, the suggested models of “lifestyles” or “neo-tribes” presented by advocates of the post-subcultural approach have been effectively undermined as lacking adequate appreciation of local contexts: *Hilary Pilkington* and Richard Johnson, “Peripheral Youth: Relations of Identity and Power in Global/Local Context,” *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 6 (August 2003): 259–83.
7. For postwar youth engaging in alternative cultural practices, see: Juliane Fürst, “The Importance of Being Stylish: Youth, Culture, and Identity in Late Stalinism,” in Juliane Fürst, ed., *Late Stalinist Russia: Society Between Reconstruction and Reinvention* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 209–30; Sergei Zhuk, *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City: The West, Identity, and Ideology in Soviet Dniepropetrovsk* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); William J. Risch, *The Ukrainian West: Culture and the Fate of Empire in Soviet Lviv* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 220–50; Mark Edele, “Strange Young Men in Stalin’s Moscow: The Birth and Life of the *Stiliagi*, 1945–1953,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 50 (March 2002): 37–61; Hillary Pilkington, *Russia’s Youth and Its Culture: A Nation’s Constructors and Constructed* (New York: Routledge, 1994); James Riordan, ed., *Soviet Youth Culture* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1989); John Bushnell, *Moscow Graffiti: Language and Subculture* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990); Artemy Troitskii, *Back in the USSR: The True Story of Rock in Russia* (Winchester: Faber and Faber, 1988); Sabrina Petra Ramet, “Rock: The Music of the Revolution (and Political Conformity),” in Sabrina Petra Ramet, ed., *Rocking the State: Rock Music and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia* (Boulder: Westview, 1994), 1–14; Thomas Cushman, *Notes from Underground: Rock Music Counterculture in Russia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); Timothy W. Ryback, *Rock Around the Block: A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). On youth political dissent, see Elena Zubkova, *Russia After the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945–1957* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 130–38; Juliane Fürst, “Friends in Private, Friends in Public: The Phenomena of *Kompaniia* Among Soviet Youth in the 1950s and 1960s,” in Lewis H. Siegelbaum, ed., *Borders of Socialism: Private Spheres of Soviet Russia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 229–50; Ludmilla Alekseeva and Paul Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation: Coming of Age in the Post-Stalin Era*

(Boston: Little, Brown, 1990). On student life and politics in the Thaw, see Benjamin K. Tromly, “Re-Imagining the Soviet Intelligentsia: Student Politics and University Life, 1948–1964” (Ph. D. diss., Harvard University, 2007); L. V. Silina, *Nastroeniia sovetskogo studenchestva, 1945–1964* (Moscow: Russkii mir, 2004); A. Z. Vakser, *Leningrad poslevoennyi, 1945–1982 gody* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Ostrov, 2005).

8. I define “popular culture” as any human endeavor with a substantial aesthetic component, made for the consumption of ordinary people, as opposed to elites. My approach is informed by Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1–8, and Louise McReynolds, “Russia’s Popular Culture in History and Theory,” in Abbott Gleason, ed., *A Companion to Russian History* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 295–310. For broader theoretical perspectives on popular culture, see Tony Bennett, “Introduction: Popular Culture and the ‘Turn to Gramsci,’” in Tony Bennett, Colin Mercer, and Janet Woollcott, eds., *Popular Culture and Social Relations* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1986), xi–xix; Richard B. Gruneau, “Introduction: Notes on Popular Culture and Political Practice,” in Richard B. Gruneau ed., *Popular Cultures and Political Practices* (Toronto: Garamong Press, 1988), 11–32; Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Richard Nice, trans. and ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984). For recent overviews of the field of popular culture studies, see Paul Bowman, *Deconstructing Popular Culture* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), and John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction* (Essex: Pearson Education Ltd., 2009).
9. Exceptions are two historians who have published articles on post-Stalin, state-sponsored popular culture dealing with, more or less directly, with college students: see Susan Costanzo, “Reclaiming the Stage: Amateur Theater-Studio Audiences in the Late Soviet Era,” *Slavic Review* 57 (Summer 1998): 398–424, and “Amateur Theaters and Amateur Publics in the Russian Republic, 1958–71,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 86 (April 2008): 372–94; also Bella Ostromoukhova, “Le Dégel et les troupes amateur: Changements politiques et activités artistiques des étudiants, 1953–1970,” *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 47 (January–June 2006): 303–25, and “KVN—‘molodezhnaia kul'tura shestidesiatykh'?” *Neprikosnovennyi zapas: Debaty o politike i kul'ture* 36 (2004), (accessed March 3, 2012). A monograph published before the archives opened and thus relying only on official publications and interviews provides a useful broad overview, without emphasizing youth issues: Anne White, *De-Stalinization and the House of Culture: Declining State Control Over Leisure in the USSR, Poland, and Hungary, 1953–89* (New York: Routledge,



- 1990). A Russian volume has articles by specialists in theater, music, and art rather than traditional historians, and focuses largely on cultural rather than political and social analysis, while surprisingly lacking archival evidence: K. G. Bogemskaiia, ed., *Samodeiatel'noe khudozhestvennoe tvorchestvo v SSSR: Ocherki istorii, konets 1950-kh—nachalo 1990-kh godov* (St. Petersburg: "Dmitrii Bulanin," 1999).
10. For works that generally support this position, see William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003); Melanie Ilič, Introduction to *Soviet State and Society Under Nikita Khrushchev*, ed. Melanie Ilič and Jeremy Smith (New York: Routledge, 2009), 1–8; P. L. Vail and A. A. Genis, *60-e. Mir sovetского cheloveka* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1988); L. B. Brusilovskaiia, *Kul'tura povsednevnosti v epokhu "ottepli": Metamorfozy stilia* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo URAO, 2001). Though with more caveats, especially about the reformer-conservative binary, the following also generally support these points: Polly Jones, "The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization," in Polly Jones, ed., *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1–18, and Iu. V. Aksiutin, *Khrushchevskaiia "Ottepel'" i obshchestvennye nastroyeniia v SSSR v 1953–1964 gg.* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2004). For the classic statement in American historiography on reformer vs. conservative struggles in the Thaw, see Stephen F. Cohen, "The Friends and Foes of Change: Reformism and Conservatism in the Soviet Union," in Stephen F. Cohen, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Robert Sharlet, eds., *The Soviet Union since Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 11–31.
11. Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 279–302. A number of other authors, though not necessarily endorsing Kharkhordin's specific argument of escalating social control and oppression in the Thaw due to the influence of increased collectivism, also drew attention to the coercive elements of the Thaw, questioning the pluralistic, tolerant nature of this period: N. A. Mitrokhin, *Russkaia partiia: Dvizhenie russkikh natsionalistov v SSSR, 1953–1985 gody* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2003); Vladimir Kozlov, *Mass Uprisings in the USSR: Protest and Rebellion in the Post-Stalin Years*, Elaine M. MacKinnon trans. and ed. (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2002); Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Social Parasites: How Tramps, Idle Youth, and Busy Entrepreneurs Impeded the Soviet March to Communism," *Cahiers du monde russe* 47 (January–June 2006): 377–408; Brian LaPier, "Private Matters or Public Crimes: The Emergence of Domestic Hooliganism in the Soviet Union, 1939–1966," in Siegelbaum, *Borders of Socialism*, 191–207; Julie Elkner, "The Changing Face of Repression Under Khrushchev," in Ilic and Smith,

- Soviet State and Society*, 142–60; Miriam Dobson, “‘Show the Bandit-Enemies No Mercy!’: Amnesty, Criminality, and Public Response in 1953,” in Jones, *Dilemmas of De-Stalinization*, 21–40; Gleb Tsipursky, “Citizenship, Deviance, and Identity: Soviet Youth Newspapers as Agents of Social Control in the Thaw-Era Leisure Campaign,” *Cahiers du monde russe* 49 (September–October 2008): 1–22. A few older works also pointed out coercive elements in the Thaw: see Herbert Ritvo, “Totalitarianism Without Coercion?” in Abraham Brumberg, ed., *Russia Under Khrushchev: An Anthology from Problems of Communism* (New York: Praeger, 1962), 634–57, and Leon Lipson, “Hosts and Pests: The Fight Against Parasites,” in Richard Cornell, ed., *The Soviet Political System: A Book of Readings* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 323–333.
12. Fürst, “Friends in Private, Friends in Public”; Alekseeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*; Alena V. Ledeneva, *Russia's Economy of Favours: Blat, Networking, and Informal Exchange* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
  13. See Juliane Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation: Soviet Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism, 1945–56* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 20–29. Also see Fürst, Polly Jones, and Susan Morrissey, “The Relaunch of the Soviet Project, 1945–64: Introduction,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 86 (2008): 201–07. On these issues as relating to trade and consumption, see Julie Hessler, *A Social History of Soviet Trade: Trade Policy, Retail Practices, and Consumption, 1917–1953* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). For an insightful treatment of the role of leisure and popular culture in relation to this question, see Stites, *Russian Popular Culture*, 123–47. David Nordlander makes the argument that one reason for the perception of a break between Stalin and Khrushchev came from the political demands of the perestroika era: see his “Khrushchev's Image in the Light of Glasnost and Perestroika,” *Russian Review* 52 (April 1993): 248–64. Skepticism of a substantial break between Khrushchev and Stalin was already expressed by Western European and U. S. scholars in the 1960s: see Ritvo, “Totalitarianism Without Coercion?” 634–57.
  14. Bittner, *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw*.
  15. Miriam Dobson, “Contesting the Paradigms of De-Stalinization: Readers' Responses to *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*,” *Slavic Review* 64 (Fall 2005): 580–600. She expanded her ideas in *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform After Stalin* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

16. This understanding of agency, including the capacity of individuals to shape their environment to fit their desires, is most influenced by Anna Krylova, *Women in Combat: Writing Shared History of Violence on the Eastern Front, 1930s–1980s* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), and also her "Identity, Agency, and the First Soviet Generation," in Stephen Lovell, ed., *Generations in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 101–22; Kiril Tomoff, *Creative Union: The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers, 1939–1953* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 113–27; Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 5–11; Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Steven F. Rendall, trans. and ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 29–42; Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 147–217. For other examples of youth agency in this period outside of club settings, see Gleb Tsipursky, "Conformism and Agency: Model Young Communists and the Komsomol Press in the Later Khrushchev Years, 1961–1964," *Europe-Asia Studies* (forthcoming in 2013).
17. The official sources suffer from the problem of institutionally motivated bias, while shifting memories present challenges in using personal sources. I present a critical comparison of these sources to ensure a more informed account. The archives include the Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI), especially the Komsomol collection; Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istorii (RGANI); Tsentral'nyi arkhiv obshchestvenno-politicheskoi istorii Moskvyy (TsAOPIM); Tsentral'nyi arkhiv gosudarstva Moskvyy (TsAGM); Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literaturnoi istorii (RGALI); Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istorii saratovskoi oblasti (GANISO). I also cite relevant stories from *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, the national organ of the Komsomol; *Moskovskii komsomolets*, of the Moscow city Komsomol committee; the Saratov regional and city Komsomol newspaper, named *Molodoi stalinets* until September 1956, and from then on *Zaria molodezhi*; and the newspaper of the Saratov State University (Saratovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, hereafter SGU), called *Stalinets* until early January 1957 and *Leninskii put'* afterward. The instruction booklets, providing detailed guidance to lower-level officials in the field of culture, represent a cross between Soviet advice literature and worker instruction manuals. For an insightful analysis of advice literature in the Khrushchev years, see Catriona Kelly, *Refining Russia: Advice Literature, Polite Culture, and Gender from Catherine to Yeltsin*

(New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 313–67. The interview source base consists of fifty-five interviews that I conducted in 2008–09 with individuals who participated in organized youth leisure activities in the period from 1945 to 1968, as well as some published interviews. On oral history in particular, my work is informed by Donald J. Raleigh, *Russia's Sputnik Generation: Soviet Baby Boomers Talk About Their Lives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), and Bruce Grant, "An Average Azeri Village (1930): Remembering Rebellion in the Caucasus Mountains," *Slavic Review* 63 (Winter 2004): 705–31. While recognizing the problems of bias inherent in using Soviet archives, newspaper publications, and instruction booklets, and the possible shifting memory of the people interviewed, my assumption is that a comparison of multiple iterations of all four types of sources presents the maximum possibility of accuracy, especially when relying on reports that are critical of local conditions. This approach is most viable for individual case studies, and this essay's citation of statistical indicators, such as numbers of clubs, represents a cross between reality and the political interests of those officials making reports or publishing instructions, most notably pleasing higher-up officials. Still, changes in the statistics over time, I would argue, do constitute meaningful indications of shifts at the grassroots level, especially if they are reported in multiple sources at both local and national levels. A good source on general problems in Soviet archival texts is Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia: Terror, Propaganda, and Dissent, 1934–1941* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), while on newspapers in the Khrushchev years, see Thomas C. Wolfe, *Governing Soviet Journalism: The Press and the Socialist Person After Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

18. For insight into this issue, see the following discussion and responses to it: Anna Krylova, "Beyond the Spontaneity-Consciousness Paradigm: 'Class Instinct' as a Promising Category of Historical Analysis," *Slavic Review* 62 (Spring 2003): 1–23; Reginald E. Zelnik, "A Paradigm Lost? Response to Anna Krylova," *ibid.*, 24–33; Igal Halfin, "Between Instinct and Mind: The Bolshevik View of the Proletarian Self," *ibid.*, 34–40. There is another response here: Leopold H. Haimson, "Lenin's Revolutionary Career Revisited: Some Observations on Recent Discussions," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 5 (Winter 2004): 55–80.
19. For ideological-political conflicts between the Right and the Left in the NEP see, for example, Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Soviet State and Society Between the Revolutions, 1918–1929* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 135–223, and Igal Halfin, *From Darkness to Light: Class, Consciousness, and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 205–82.

Also see the following article and responses to it: Michael David-Fox, “What Is Cultural Revolution?” *Russian Review* 58 (April 1999): 181–201.

20. For the NEP-era conflicts between the Right and Left and their impact on youth, see: Anne E. Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 41–95; Michael David-Fox, *Revolution of the Mind: Higher Learning Among the Bolsheviks, 1918–1929* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 83–132; V. I. Isaev, *Molodezh' Sibiri v transformiruiushchemsia obshchestve: usloviia i mekhanizmy sotsializatsii (1920–1930-e gg.)* (Novosibirsk: Gosudarstvennyi universitet Novosibirska, 2003). Gorsuch's conclusion that it was only in the late 1920s that the pendulum definitively swung to discipline imposed from above convincingly contradicts the findings of Isabel Tirado, whose volume, published in the late 1980s and consequently unable to consult the archival evidence, suggested that the Civil War, as opposed to the Stalin years, determined the turn toward discipline: Isabel A. Tirado, *Young Guard! The Communist Youth League, Petrograd 1917–1920* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988). For the evolution of youth policy from the NEP to the Stalin years, see Peter Konecny, *Builders and Deserters: Students, State, and Community in Leningrad, 1917–1941* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 62–141; Ralph T. Fisher, Jr., *Pattern for Soviet Youth: A Study of the Congresses of the Komsomol, 1918–1954* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959); Kassof, *The Soviet Youth Program*. For the argument that the NEP saw a politically assertive, activist, initiative-oriented child or youth, who was transformed in official discourse into a more disciplined, less politically active, and more education-oriented child under Stalin, see Catriona Kelly, *Children's World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890–1991* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 76–96.
21. For evidence that the idea of increasing popular participation was under discussion in 1945–47, before the turn toward militancy, see: Alexander Titov, “The 1961 Party Programme and the Fate of Khrushchev's Reforms,” in Ilic and Smith, *Soviet State and Society*, 8–25, and A. V. Pyzhikov, *Khrushchevskaia “ottepel'”* (Moscow: OLMA-PRESS, 2002), 15–40. For more on the idea of this clique that political propaganda would solve all problems, see Robert Edelman, *Spartak Moscow: A History of the People's Team in the Worker's State* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 165–66.
22. *O rabote komsomol'skikh organizatsii vysshikh uchebnykh zavedenii* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1952), 5–6.

23. *Postanovleniia chetvertogo plenuma TsK VLKSM (23 avgusta–25 avgusta, 1950 goda)* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1950).
24. For example, the keynote speech at the 1950 Moscow city Komsomol organization conference did not have an emphasis on youth initiative: TsAOPIM, fond (f.) 635, opis' (op.) 11, delo (d.) 31, (listy) ll. 3–36. Neither did the keynote speech at the 1950 Moscow Krasnopresnenskii district Komsomol committee annual conference: TsAOPIM, f. 667, op. 2, d. 33, ll. 2–30.
25. *Rezoliutsii i dokumenty XI s'ezda VLKSM* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1950), 19–20.
26. GANISO, f. 4529, op. 9, d. 3, l. 291.
27. "Razvivat' initsiativu molodezhi," *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, December 9, 1951.
28. GANISO, f. 4529, op. 9, d. 3, l. 289.
29. For a representative example, see the speech of the Komsomol secretary of the Moscow Geological Research Institute at the 1951 Krasnopresnenskii district Komsomol conference. The secretary criticizes the district Komsomol committee for failing to visit their institute and provide appropriate guidance. Another speech, by the Komsomol secretary of Moscow State University (Moskovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, hereafter MGU), also criticizes the poor leadership of the district Komsomol committee. See TsAOPIM, f. 667, op. 2, d. 41, ll. 84–87, for the first, and 130–35 for the second. For an example of criticism of inadequate management in youth newspapers, see "Rabotat' tvorcheski, initsiativno" [Work in a creative manner, take initiative] *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, December 8, 1951, 2.
30. For the punishment of youth going even slightly beyond the borders of the permissible, see Zubkova, *Russia after the War*, 130–38, and Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation*, 95–136. For the broader context of postwar repression, see Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 445–75.
31. Anna Krylova, *Women in Combat*.
32. On the cult of personality in the postwar Stalin years, see Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 195–232. On the broader manipulation of the memory of World War II, see Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

33. On the antic cosmopolitan campaign, see David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian Identity, 1931–1956* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 183–96; Serhy Yekelchuk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 62–71; Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 238–57; N. I. Nikolaeva, “Nekotorye itogi antiamerikanskoi kampanii v SSSR v kontse 40-nachale 50kh godov,” in A. V. Gladyshev and V. S. Mirzekhanov, eds., *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia* (Saratov: Izdatel'stvo Saratovskogo universiteta, 2004), 100–12. Specifically against Jews, see: Jonathan Brent and Vladimir P. Naumov, *Stalin's Last Crime: The Plot Against the Jewish Doctors, 1948–1953* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks! Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 282–300; David Brandenberger, “Stalin's Last Crime: Recent Scholarship on Postwar Soviet Antisemitism and the Doctor's Plot,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 6 (Winter 2005): 187–204.
34. For its impact on youth, see Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation*, 167–99, and Tromly, “Re-Imagining the Soviet Intelligentsia,” 151–257.
35. The following two works, while focusing on children, also describe images of ideal youth in these years: Kelly, *Children's World*, 119–29, and Margaret Peacock, “Contested Innocence: Images of the Child in the Cold War” (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2008), 25–39.
36. RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 38, l. 127.
37. The 1954 Moscow city Komsomol committee annual conference's keynote speech did not pay sustained attention to youth initiative: TsAOPIM, f. 635, op. 13, d. 267, ll. 15–48.
38. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 811, ll. 1–13.
39. Thus, the 1958 Moscow city Komsomol committee conference's keynote speech praised the Komsomol cells in Moscow schools for developing, over the last two years, “more initiative, grassroots creativity”: see TsAOPIM, f. 635, op. 14, d. 484, l. 20.
40. Instead, the Komsomol officials were allowed to receive a salary bonus of not over 450 rubles a month: RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 3, d. 949, ll. 111–12.
41. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 3, d. 971, ll. 62–63.

42. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 3, d. 880, l. 36.
43. According to a primer for new Komsomol members: A. Disudenko and A. Skrypnik, *Zakon komsomol'skoi zhizni* (Moscow: "Molodaia gvardiia," 1966), 96.
44. The classic work on the post-Stalin leadership's turn toward popular participation is George Breslauer, "Khrushchev Reconsidered," in Cohen, Rabinowitch, and Sharlet eds., *The Soviet Union since Stalin.*, 50–70. For a recent work confirming many of these points, see Soo-Hoon Park, "Party Reform and 'Volunteer Principle' Under Khrushchev in Historical Perspective" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1993). For Khrushchev's ideologically motivated drive to achieve communism, see, for example, Anatolii Strel'iani, "Industrial Management and Economic Reform Under Khrushchev," in Taubman, Khrushchev, and Gleason, *Nikita Khrushchev*, 113–37.
45. A. N. Shelepin, *Otchetnyi doklad: Tsentral'nogo Komiteta Vsesoiuznogo leninskogo kommunisticheskogo soiuzna molodezhi III s'ezdu komsomola (15 apreliia 1958 g.)* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1958), 63–65.
46. The party general secretary giving such an address at the Komsomol Congress constitutes a break with past practice, demonstrating the escalating importance of the young generation in the post-Stalin years: N. S. Khrushchev, *Vospityvat' aktivnykh i soznatel'nykh stroitelei kommunisticheskogo obshchestva (rech' na XIII s'ezde VLKSM 18 apreliia 1958 goda)* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1961), 40.
47. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 3, d. 946, ll. 12–13.
48. For this drive see, for example, Deborah A. Field, *Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchev's Russia* (New York: Lang Publishing, 2007), and E. R. Iarskaia-Smirnova and P. V. Romanov, eds., *Sovetskaia sotsial'naia politika: stseny i deistvuiushchie litsa, 1940–1985* (Moscow: Variant, 2008).
49. Kelly, *Children's World*, 130–54, and Peacock, "Contested Innocence," 39–95.
50. See a November 1953 report by the Komsomol propaganda department: RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 741, l. 100.
51. P. A. Mikhailov, *Otchetnyi doklad na XI s'ezde komsomola o rabote TsK VLKSM* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1949), 33–34.
52. A. N. Shelepin, *Otchetnyi doklad TsK VLKSM XII s'ezdu komsomola* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1954), 44–45.



53. For more free time available in the Thaw, see John Bushnell, "Urban Leisure Culture in Post-Stalin Russia: Stability as a Social Problem?" in Terry L. Thompson and Richard Sheldon, eds., *Soviet Society and Culture: Essays in Honor of Vera S. Dunham* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), 58–86. For youth in particular, see RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 3, d. 877, ll. 3–4. For more on leisure in Russia, see Stephen Lovell, "Leisure in Russia: 'Free' Time and Its Uses," *Forum for Anthropology and Culture* 3 (2006): 123–54. For a good summary of Soviet sociological studies on youth leisure in the mid-1960s, see F. Gayle Durham, *The Use of Free Time by Young People in Soviet Society* (Cambridge: Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1966). Another interesting example of a Soviet leisure space is the bathhouse: see Ethan Pollock, "Real Men Go to the Bania": Postwar Soviet Masculinities and the Bathhouse," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 11 (Winter 2010): 47–76.
54. The keynote speech at the 1956 Moscow city Komsomol committee conference expressed gratefulness in the name of youth to the party for the increase in free time: TsAOPIM, f. 635, op. 13, d. 484, l. 30.
55. "Hooliganism," a broad label used by the Soviet media to describe the "inappropriate" conduct of, for the most part, working-class males, referred to youth cultural practices which tended to combine fighting, drinking, stealing, harassing women, smoking, and cursing. For more on hooliganism in the Khrushchev years, and in particular its relation to young people, see Brian LaPierre, "Defining, Policing, and Punishing Hooliganism in Khrushchev's Russia" (Ph. D. diss., University of Chicago, 2006); Dobson, "'Show the Bandit-Enemies no Mercy!';"; Ann Livschiz, "De-Stalinizing Soviet Childhood: The Quest for Moral Rebirth, 1953–1958," in Jones, *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization*, 117–34; Kozlov, *Mass Uprisings in the USSR. Stiliagi*, or style-obsessed, was a term that the party used to homogenize and deprecate the behavior of young men and more rarely women, mostly from the middle class, enamored with Western European and American popular culture who appeared in the USSR in the end of World War II. These youth engaged in cultural practices they imagined to resemble foreign youth styles, including dancing the Twist and boogie-woogie, listening to jazz and rock'n'roll, wearing jeans and miniskirts, admiring abstract art, and drinking whiskey and cocktails: see, among many, Edele, "Strange Young Men"; Fürst, "The Importance of Being Stylish"; Stites, *Russian Popular Culture*, 123–47; Gleb Tspursky, "Coercion and Consumption: The Khrushchev Leadership's Ruling Style in the Campaign against 'Westernized' Youth, 1954–64," in William J. Risch and Kate Transchel eds., *The Socialist Beat in the Soviet Bloc* (Lanham: Lexington Books,

- forthcoming in 2012). Notably, in some cases the authorities applied the label of “hooligan” to youth engaging in “western” practices, especially in cases involving drinking and sexual harassment. For the powerful effect of labeling a group as deviant, see the historiography on the “labeling theory,” which posits that “deviants” become “deviant” when those with power successfully attach this label to them: Stephen Pfohl, *Images of Deviance and Social Control: A Sociological History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 345–98, and Stuart H. Traub and Craig B. Little, eds., *Theories of Deviance* (Itasca: F. E. Peacock, 1985), 277–332. For a work that widely utilizes the labeling theory approach in the Soviet context, see LaPierre, *Defining, Policing, and Punishing Hooliganism*.
56. For how this constituted a break with Stalin-era practices, see Tsipursky, “Citizenship, Deviance, and Identity.”
57. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 3, d. 878, l. 77.
58. For more on clubs in this period, see White, *De-Stalinization and the House of Culture*, 34–39. On clubs under Stalin, see Lewis H. Siegelbaum, “The Shaping of Soviet Workers’ Leisure: Workers’ Clubs and Palaces of Culture in the 1930s,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 56 (October 1999): 78–92. On NEP, see John B. Hatch, “Hangouts and Hangovers: State, Class and Culture in Moscow’s Workers’ Club Movement, 1925–1928,” *Russian Review* 53 (January 1994): 97–117. On the Civil War, see Gabriele Gorzka, “Proletarian Culture in Practice: Worker’s Clubs, 1917–1921,” in John W. Strong, ed., *Essays on Revolutionary Culture and Stalinism* (Columbus: Slavica, 1990), 29–55. For an example of a cultural recreation establishment dedicated to children, see Susan E. Reid, *Khrushchev in Wonderland: The Pioneer Palace in Moscow’s Lenin Hills, 1962*. In the series, *The Carl Beck Papers*, #1606. (Pittsburgh: Center for Russian and East European Studies, University of Pittsburgh, 2002).
59. For an example of the larger type of club, a 1960 archival report describes the Lenin House of Culture at the large and wealthy “Trekhgornaia Manufaktura” factory in Moscow’s Krasnopresnenskii district. Its theater hall, one of the two buildings that comprised this House of Culture, showed movies, concerts, and shows, and hosted lectures, meetings, conferences, and celebrations. For movies, its seating capacity was 743 people, 1,003 for performances and concerts, and 1,100 for various meetings. The House of Culture also had its main club house, with twelve rooms for various artistic purposes such as the practices of amateur arts collectives; a smaller hall for 300 people, which held various events ranging from lectures to concerts; finally, a large library. See TsAGM, f. 1988, op. 1, d. 85, ll. 8-10.

60. In three randomly selected two-week periods of *Komsomol'skaia pravda* I found only two relevant articles on clubs in 1950 and the same number in 1951, but six stories in 1955 and eight in 1956. In the Stalin years, methodological literature on club work was relatively rare, a subject of much complaint by club workers. Many more publications appeared after Stalin's death, such as A. Bratenkov, *Klubom rukovodit sovet: Iz opyta raboty kluba Krasnoiarskogo lespromkhozha* (Tomsk, 1955); S. P. Semechenko, *Resheniia XX s'ezda KPSS v massy: Iz opyta raboty Timkovicheskogo sel'skogo kluba, Kopyl'skogo raiona, Minskoi oblasti* (Minsk, 1956); T. Amosova and E. Ivanova, *Tematicheskie molodezhnye vechera k 40-letiu leninskogo komsomola* (Alma-Ata, 1958); M. E. Nepomniashchii, ed., *Entuziasty: Sbornik o peredovikakh kul'turno-prosvittel'noi rabotay* (Moscow, 1959); Z. A. Petrova and M. P. Rymkevich, eds., *Novoe v rabote klubov* (Moscow, 1962).
61. For internal archival reports, see the Novgorod regional Komsomol organization, which indicated that the region fixed many clubs and established “red corners”: RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 802, l. 75. For newspapers, see “*Klub otkrylsia v derevne Kuznetsovo*” [A club opened in the village Kuznetsovo], *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, January 16, 1955. Also see *Leninskii put'*, October 26, 1957; *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, January 15, 1955; *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, Aug 4, 1955.
62. Other postwar Stalin years had even fewer youth-oriented evenings than 1950, as listed in the House of Culture's reports: TsAGM, f. 44, op. 1, d. 19, ll. 1–4.
63. TsAGM, f. 44, op. 1, d. 50, ll. 5–6.
64. The reference to not satisfying youth desires, in this context, likely meant both that the local Komsomol committee complained about the club, and/or that the events at the club did not have widespread youth attendance: TsAGM, f. 1988, op. 1, d. 21, ll. 13–15.
65. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 630, l. 102.
66. Shelepin, *Otchetnyi doklad TsK VLKSM XII s'ezdu komsomola*, 46.
67. S. P. Pavlov, *Otchet Tsentral'nogo Komiteta VLKSM i zadachi komsomola, vytekaiushchie iz reshenii XXII s'ezda KPSS* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1962), 51.
68. A. N. Shelepin, *Ob uluchshenii ideino-vospitatel'noi raboty komsomol'skikh organizatsii sredi molodezhi (Doklad na VII plenum TsK VLKSM 1957 g.)* (Moscow, 1957), 6. Here, I disagree with White's argument that the transformation in cultural policy was unintended: White, *De-Stalinization and the House of Culture*, 37.

69. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 811, l. 8.
70. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 3, d. 912, l. 5, and RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 811, l. 8. The Kemerov regional Komsomol committee elaborated on the problem, adding the complaint that club directors received bonuses for overfilling the plan for profits from movie showings: RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 838, l. 119.
71. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 811, l. 28.
72. *XX s'ezd KPSS*, 607–08. Among the other new clubs were those devoted to varied hobbies, and, in the early 1960s, youth cafes. My research here suggests that, in contrast to *White's argument that youth clubs and internet-based clubs were a phenomenon of the 1960s, they actually took off in the previous decade: see her De-Stalinization and the House of Culture*, 2. For an in-depth look at a club devoted to nature protection, see Douglas R. Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom: Russian Nature Protection from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 312–39.
73. On NEP-era youth clubs, see Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia*, 51–52.
74. L. K. Baliasnaia, interviewed April 5, 2009. For more on this notable figure, see the biography of Komsomol TsK secretaries: A. A. Alekseeva, *Stroka v biografii* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 2003), 72.
75. For more on such clubs in Bulgaria, see Karin Taylor, *Let's Twist Again: Youth and Leisure in Socialist Bulgaria* (Wien: Lit, 2006), 95. On various forms of initiative from below in Yugoslavia, see Sabina Mihelj, “Negotiating Cold War Culture at the Crossroads of East and West: Uplifting the Working People, Entertaining the Masses, Cultivating the Nation,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53 (June 2011): 509–39.
76. Yves Cohen and Stephanie Lin, “Circulatory Localities: The Example of Stalinism in the 1930s,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 11 (Winter 2010): 11–45.
77. TsAOPIM, f. 635, op. 13, d. 484, l. 94
78. GANISO, f. 652, op. 1, d. 3, ll. 51-52.
79. “If this club was to be given into the hands of the students, it would work perfectly well. The problem is that bureaucracy rules there, and nothing good comes from

bureaucratic rule. Discussions about youth initiative will be meaningless until we have a specific task to do”: TsAOPIM, f. 6083, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 164–65.

80. For example, “*Molodezhnyi klub v TsPKiO* [Youth Club in TsPKiO],” *Moskovskii komsomolets*, May 23, 1957. Also see “*Fakel*’ [Torch],” *Zaria molodezhi*, October 3, 1956. For SGU, see “*Klub kul'tury* [Club of culture],” *Leninskii put'*, March 21, 1959.
81. “*Boi serosti i skuke* [Struggle with drabness and boredom],” *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, September 6, 1956. This club was likely opened in 1955, and may have served as an example to the Komsomol leadership in their promotion of youth initiative clubs. For an extensive depiction of this club, see RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 858, ll. 213–18.
82. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 858, l. 112. I would again like to emphasize that these numbers should not be taken as an actual count of club members; they are likely to be somewhat inflated in order to over-represent the success of the new campaign and enable the club to attract material and logistical support from local institutions.
83. Iurii S., interviewed April 16, 2009. I withhold the last names of nonpublic figures to protect anonymity.
84. RGANI, f. 5, op. 34, d. 11, ll. 64–67.
85. TsAOPIM, f. 635, op. 13, d. 370, l. 44.
86. L. K. Baliaskaia, interviewed April 5, 2009.
87. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 811, l. 26, and RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 3, d. 912, l. 6.
88. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 858, l. 111.
89. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 858, ll. 107–112. Hilary Pilkington touches on the drive of the Soviet state in the post-Stalin years to get youth used to supposedly rational leisure in her “‘The Future is Ours.’ Youth Culture in Russia, 1953 to the Present,” in Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd, eds., *Russian Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 368–386.
90. For more on Socialist Realism, which has been most clearly described in relation to literature, see Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), and Deming Brown, *Soviet Russian Literature since Stalin* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978).
91. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 630, l. 90.

92. "Vecher družby," *Moskovskii komsomolets*, February 7, 1953.
93. TsAGM, f. 44, op. 1, d. 16, l. 11.
94. TsAGM, f. 44, op. 1, d. 19, ll. 3–4.
95. *Kogda konchaetsia smena: Ocherki o kul'turno-massovoi rabote molodezhi na predpriatii* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1952), 13–14.
96. For the significance of the difference between internal and external official Soviet discourse, see: Donald J. Raleigh, "Languages of Power: How the Saratov Bolsheviks Imagined Their Enemies," *Slavic Review* 57 (Summer 1998): 320–49.
97. TsAOPIM, f. 667, op. 2, d. 39, l. 14.
98. Such questions were particularly relevant due to the low level of knowledge about sex among the population in the Khrushchev era: Anna Rotkirch, "What Kind of Sex Can You Talk about? Acquiring Sexual Knowledge in Three Soviet Generations," in Daniel Bertaux, Paul Thompson, and Anna Rotkirch, eds., *On Living through Soviet Russia* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 193–219.
99. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 858, ll. 110–11. For scholarship on Soviet fashion in the Thaw, see Sergei Zhuravlev and Jukka Gronnow, "Krasota pod kontrolem gosudarstva: Osobennosti i etapi stanovleniia sovetskoi mody," in *Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 32 (2005), 1–92; Olga Gurova, "The Art of Dressing: Body, Gender and Discourse on Fashion in Soviet Russia in the 1950s and 60s," in Eugenia Paulicelli and Hazel Clark, eds., *The Fabric of Cultures: Fashion, Identity, Globalization* (New York: Berg, 2008), 73–91; Ol'ga Vainshtein, "Female Fashion, Soviet Style: Bodies of Ideology," in Helena Goscilo and Beth Holmgren, eds., *Russia—Women—Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 64–93; L. V. Zakharova, "Naibolee raspostranenni iavliaetsia forma priamogo pal'to s odnobotnoi zastezhkoj: O soverstkoj mode epokhi 'ottepli,'" *Neprikosnovennyi Zapas: Debaty o Politeke i Kul'ture* 45 (2006), <http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/> (accessed March 3, 2012).
100. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 858, l. 109.
101. GARF, f. R-6903, op. 13, d. 50, February 8, 1961, "Vystuplenie Nikolaia Gannochki" [Speech by Nikolai Gannochki]. For the key role of radio in Stalin-era propaganda, see T. M. Goriaeva, *Radio Rossii: Politicheskii kontrol' sovetskogo radioveshchaniia v 1920–1930-kh godakh. Dokumental'naiia istoriia* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2000).

102. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 858, l. 110.
103. My examination of the archive of the Krasnopresnenskii district branch of the Ministry of Culture, which coordinated the work of trade-union clubs, found extensive lecture activity but failure to mention debates/disputes in the postwar Stalin years, in contrast to the Khrushchev era (the archive is available only from 1949 onward): TsAGM, f. 1988, op. 1. While the Stalin-era government allowed organized disputes dealing with literary works, the clubs held them rarely, if ever: TsAOPIM, f. 635, op. 11, d. 31, ll. 15–16.
104. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 811, ll. 25–28.
105. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 858, l. 114.
106. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 858, ll. 216–18.
107. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 814, ll. 17–18.
108. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 811, ll. 28.
109. On unofficial youth debate groups, often repressed by the postwar Stalinist state, see Zubkova, *Russia After the War*, 130–38, and Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation*, 95–136.
110. TsAOPIM, f. 635, op. 13, d. 546, ll. 56–57. This is likely related to criticism of the party associated with the Secret Speech and the invasion of Hungary. For more on this criticism, see Polly Jones, “From the Secret Speech to the Burial of Stalin: Real and Ideal Responses to De-Stalinization,” in Jones, *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization*, 41–63.
111. TsAOPIM, f. 6083, op. 1, d. 52, ll. 166–67. This bears a clear link to the Manege events where Khrushchev shocked the intelligentsia with his harsh condemnation of abstract art. See Susan Reid, “In the Name of the People: The Manege Affair Revisited,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 6 (Fall 2005): 673–716.
112. Iurii S., interviewed April 16, 2009.
113. See reports on youth initiative clubs: RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 858, ll. 67–68.
114. On *kompanii*, see Fürst, “Friends in Private,” and Tromly, “Re-Imagining the Soviet Intelligentsia,” 155–56.

115. This case study is mainly based on a collection of primary sources composed of published interviews with participants, including the poets and enthusiasts, and also Komsomol officials and activists, as well as very extensive quotes from republished newspaper articles and archival documents: L. V. Polikovskaia, *My predchustviie . . . predtecha . . . ploshchad' Maiakovskogo, 1958–1965* (Moscow: Zvenia, 1997); especially see the accounts of the Komsomol official who tried to organize the club, 149–52, and a Komsomol activist, 143–48. For official criticism of the events, see “(Kubarem s parnasa)” [Rolling Down Olympus], *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, January 14, 1962.
116. On efforts by *kompanii* to privatize public spaces such as cafes, see Fürst, “Friends in Private.”
117. For the broader context of MGU in the 1950s, see Tromly, “Re-Imagining the Soviet Intelligentsia,” 310–69.
118. See the group memoir of the *Arkhimed* collective: S. K. Kovaleva, *Ty pomnish', fizfak? Neformal'nye traditsii fizfaka MGU* (Moscow: Pomatur, 2003), 81–86, 362.
119. TsAOPIM, f. 6083, op. 1, d. 52, l. 18.
120. For how these came to the fore in the Thaw, see: Vail and Genis, *60-e*.
121. “Vot chto takoe klub molodezhi [This is what a true youth club is like!],” *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, July 9, 1957.
122. “Boi serosti i skuke [Struggle with drabness and boredom],” *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, September 6, 1956.
123. For more on this campaign, see Juliane Fürst, “The Arrival of Spring? Changes and Continuities in Soviet Youth Culture and Policy Between Stalin and Khrushchev,” in Jones, *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization*, 135–53.
124. Tat'iana T., interviewed January 20, 2009; Dmitrii G., interviewed February 20, 2009; Sergei S., interviewed March 18, 2009.
125. Kovaleva, *Ty pomnish', fizfak?*, 4.
126. Olga L., interviewed December 25, 2008, and Svetlana S., interviewed February 19, 2009.
127. Iu. V. Gaponov, interviewed April 29, 2009.
128. S. K. Kovaleva, interviewed March 3, 2009.



129. V. A. Miliaev, interviewed February 28, 2009, and Sergei S., interviewed March 18, 2009.
130. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 3, d. 1170, ll. 97–100.
131. See Kristin Roth-Ey, "'Loose Girls' on the Loose: Sex, Propaganda, and the 1957 Youth Festival," in Melanie Ilić, Susan E. Reid, and Lynne Attwood, eds., *Women in the Khrushchev Era* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 75–96, and Pia Koivunen, "The 1957 Moscow Youth Festival: Propagating a New, Peaceful Image of the Soviet Union," in Ilic and Smith eds., *Soviet State and Society* 46–65.
132. See Fürst, "The Arrival of Spring," and Tspursky, "Citizenship, Deviance, and Identity."
133. Kovaleva, *Ty pomnish', fizfak?*, 32–75, and Tromly, "Re-Imagining the Soviet Intelligentsia," 370–24.
134. As argued by Fürst, "Friends in Private, Friends in Public."
135. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 1096, l. 3.
136. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 858, l. 113.
137. RGANI, f. 5, op. 34, d. 11, ll. 69–70. For more on complaint letters in the Thaw, see Gleb Tspursky, "'As a Citizen, I Cannot Ignore These Facts': Whistleblowing in the Khrushchev Era," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 58 (March 2010): 52–69.
138. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 858, l. 208; Iurii S., interviewed April 16, 2009.
139. RGANI, f. 5, op. 34, d. 11, l. 71.
140. For the original report to the minister of culture, see RGALI, f. 2329, op. 10, d. 183, ll. 28–31. For the copy forwarded to the Komsomol TsK, see RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 830, ll. 11–14.
141. For this turn, see Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 300–24. For its particular impact on youth cultural policy, see Bittner, *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw*, 84.
142. G. G. Karpov and N. D. Sintsov, *Klubnoe delo: Uchebnoe posobie* (Moscow, 1959), 26.
143. According to a Komsomol TsK-sponsored conference: RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 32, d. 1096, ll. 3–16.

144. Pavlov, *Otchet Tsentral'nogo Komiteta VLKSM i zadachi komsomola, vytekaiushchie iz reshenii XXII s'ezda KPSS*, 37.
145. Kovaleva, *Ty pomnish, fizfak?*, 81–82.
146. Tat'iana T., interviewed January 20, 2009.
147. Kovaleva, *Ty pomnish, fizfak?*, 85, 95–98.
148. Kovaleva, *Ty pomnish, fizfak?*, 98. Miliaev specifically identifies a conservative turn in the late 1960s as responsible for the opera being forced to leave MGU: V. A. Miliaev, interviewed February 28, 2009. So does Gaponov: Iu. V. Gaponov, interviewed April 29, 2009. For the broader suppression of amateur arts, in particular theater, in MGU in the late 1960s, see Costanzo, “Amateur Theaters and Amateur Publics.”
149. For explicit ties between the congress and youth initiative clubs, see a 1962 conference on youth initiative clubs: RGASPI, f. M-1, op 32, d. 1096, l. 7.
150. For youth cafes and jazz clubs, see A. S. Kozlov, “*Kozel na sakse*”: *I tak vsiu zhizn'* (Moscow: Vagrius, 1998), 112–13; Stites, *Russian Popular Culture*, 123–47; S. Frederick Starr, *Red and Hot: The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union, 1917–1980* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 261–288; E. S. Barban: “Dzhaz v epokhu Khrushcheva: ‘Na kostiakh’ i tol’ko na tantsakh,” [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/russian/in\\_depth/newsid\\_4753000/4753692.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/russian/in_depth/newsid_4753000/4753692.stm) (accessed March 3, 2012).
151. For KVN, see M. V. Iunisov, *Mifopoetika studencheskogo smekha (STEM i KVN)* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi institute iskusstvoznaniia, 1999); *Ostromoukhova*, “*KVN—‘molodezhnaia kul'tura shestidesiatykh?*” *For Goluboi ogonek*, see Valentina Shatrova, “*Tot samyi 'Goluboi Ogonek'*,” *Zhurnalists 5 (May 2008)*: 49. *On Soviet youth programs in general during those years, which places shows such as KVN in a broader context*, see Mark Koenig, “*Media and Reform: The Case of Youth Programming on Soviet Television (1955–1990)*” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1995), 74–124, and Kristin Roth-Ey, “*Mass Media and the Remaking of Soviet Culture, 1950s–1960s*” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2003).
152. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 34, d. 141, l. 95.
153. These files included: RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 34, d. 68, and RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 34, d. 141.

154. For the relevant sections of Khrushchev's speech, see N. S. Khrushchev, *Vospityvat' aktivnykh i soznatel'nykh stroitelei kommunisticheskogo obshchestva (rech' na XIII s'ezde VLKSM 18 apreliia 1958 goda)* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1961), 33–40. For Brezhnev's speech, *XVI s'ezd Vsesoiuznogo Leninskogo Kommunisticheskogo Soiuzna Molodezhi: Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1971), 16–31.
155. *XVI s'ezd Vsesoiuznogo Leninskogo Kommunisticheskogo Soiuzna Molodezhi*, 89–90.
156. Mike Bowker, "Brezhnev and Superpower Relations," in Edwin Bacon and Mark Sandle, eds., *Brezhnev Reconsidered* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 90–109.
157. For more on "Under the Integral," see Paul R. Josephson, *New Atlantis Revisited: Akademgorodok, the Siberian City of Science* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), and A. G. Borzenkov, *Molodezh' i politika: Vozmozhnosti i predely studencheskoi samodeiatel'nosti na vostoke Rossii (1961–1991 gg.)*, vol. 2 (Novosibirsk: Novosibirskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2002), 170.
158. Costanzo, "Amateur Theaters and Amateur Publics."
159. *XVI s'ezd Vsesoiuznogo Leninskogo Kommunisticheskogo Soiuzna Molodezhi: stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1971), 72.
160. RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 67, d. 127, l. 140. However, clubs for adolescents also had potential to permit youth too much autonomy, as seen in the following narrative about an adolescent literary club: Elena Pudovkina, "Klub 'Derzanie,'" *Pchela* 26–27 (May–August 2000): [http://www.pchela.ru/podshiv/26\\_27.htm](http://www.pchela.ru/podshiv/26_27.htm) (accessed March 3, 2012).
161. See Zhuk, *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City*, 215–28, and Yngvar B. Steinholt, *Rock in the Reservation: Songs from the Leningrad Rock Club, 1981–86* (New York: MMMSP, 2005).
162. Borzenkov, *Molodezh' i politika*, 166–67.
163. Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 193–224.
164. Anatolii K., interviewed December 12, 2008; Tat'iana T., interviewed January 20, 2009; V. A. Miliaev, interviewed February 28, 2009.

165. For the conference, see *Molodezh' v rabochem klube* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1927), 5, 20–21, 26–27. For in-depth descriptions of Komsomol-managed clubs during NEP, see S. Dolinskii, *Klub molodezhi v den' 1 maia* (Moscow: Novaia Moskva, 1925).
166. For more on youth in clubs during the NEP, see Gorsuch, Anne E. *Flappers and Foxtrotters: Soviet Youth in the "Roaring Twenties."* In the series, *The Carl Beck Papers* #1102. (Pittsburgh: Center for Russian and East European Studies, University of Pittsburgh, 1994).; Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia*, 51–52; Hatch, "Hangouts and Hangovers." For the imposition of centralized control over other cultural recreation institutions in the transition from NEP to the Stalin years, see Lynn Mally, *Culture of the Future: The Proletkult Movement in Revolutionary Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), and Mally, *Revolutionary Acts: Amateur Theater and the Soviet State, 1917–1938* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 213–20.
167. And sought to promote it in internal policy discussions in 1945–47 before being decisively overruled in the militant turn in 1947–48: Titov, "The 1961 Party Program," and Pyzhikov, *Khrushchevskaia "ottepel."* Here we see intriguing parallels to the bureaucrats that Bruce W. Lincoln describes as developing ideas for reform under Nicholas I, which they implemented under Alexander II: see his *The Great Reforms: Autocracy, Bureaucracy, and the Politics of Change in Imperial Russia* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1990).
168. Svetlana S., interviewed February 19, 2009. For more on the outrage of the party committee about the costume and the argument about the gloves: Kovaleva, *Ty pomnish', fizfak?*, 82.
169. S. K. Kovaleva, interviewed March 3, 2009. For how such activities constituted efforts to engage with an "Imaginary West," see Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 158–237.
170. V. A. Miliaev, interviewed March 1, 2009; Iu. V. Gaponov, interviewed April 29, 2009; Dmitrii G., interviewed February 20, 2009; Sergei S., interviewed March 18, 2009.
171. Evidence even indicates that the U. S. government quite deliberately sought to promote "western" youth culture in the Soviet Union and other socialist states: Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 13–17, 92–120, and Von

Eschen, “‘Satchmo Blows Up the World’: Jazz, Race, and Empire During the Cold War,” in Reinhold Wagnleitner and Elaine Tyler May, eds., “*Here, There and Everywhere*”: *The Foreign Politics of American Popular Culture* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), 163–78.

172. Mikhail R., interviewed June 1, 2009.
173. For a youth club censured and eventually disbanded for exhibiting Ukrainian nationalism in the late 1960s, see: Zhuk, *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City*, 31–52. For a club devoted to rock 'n' roll that tried to negotiate a delicate balance between acceptance by youth and staying within the boundaries permitted by higher-ups, see: Steinholt, *Rock in the Reservation*.
174. Polikovskaia, *My predchustviie*, 143–52.
175. For an illuminating illustration of how state-sponsored youth poetry institutions became politicized in the Gorbachev years, see Borzenkov, *Molodezh' i politika*, 170.
176. While perestroika represents an obvious example, for efforts to increase popular participation in governance during the Brezhnev era, see: John Goodring, “The Roots of Perestroika,” in Bacon and Sandle, *Brezhnev Reconsidered*, 188–202.
177. For the classic work on the turn toward private life in the Brezhnev years, see Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Public and Private Life of the Soviet People: Changing Values in Post-Stalin Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). Deborah Field convincingly reconceptualizes the somewhat dichotomous image of the Soviet experience of public and private life presented by Shlapentokh: *Private Life and Communist Morality*. For a broader commentary on private and public in the Soviet context, see Lewis H. Siegelbaum, “Introduction: Mapping Private Spheres in the Soviet Context,” in Siegelbaum, *Borders of Socialism*, 1–21.