

## The Americanization of the Soviet Living Newspaper

By Lynn Mally

This article examines the migration of a Soviet agitational theatrical form from Russia to the United States in the 1920s and 1930s. The Soviet living newspaper, or *zhivaia gazeta*, began during the Russian Civil War as a method to act out a pro-Soviet version of the news for mainly illiterate Red Army soldiers. During the 1920s, it evolved into an experimental form of agitprop theater that attracted the interest of foreigners, who hoped to develop new methods of political theater in their own countries. In the United States, the living newspaper format was first adopted by American communist circles. Eventually, the depression-era arts program, the Federal Theatre Project (FTP), incorporated an expanded and altered version as part of its many offerings. Living newspapers eventually became one of the FTP's most celebrated and criticized performance genres. The political content of American living newspapers was a major factor in the government's elimination of the FTP in 1939.